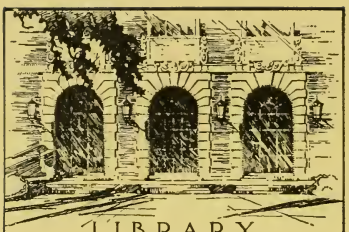

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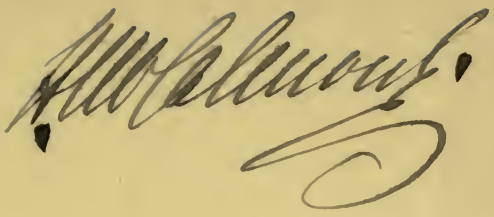

VAGARIES OF LIFE.

VOL. II.

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BY

W. WELLINGTON CAIRNES, ESQ.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

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VAGARIES OF LIFE.

CHAPTER I.

Mr. Longfellow is now dead: he slipped his moorings, *nauticé*, on the very night of the Prices' return to town; long expected, and without a struggle, his death brought no violence of grief, being to him but a glorious release.

Sir William, sister, and Lucy, arrived at Bridlestone in time for the last rites; and, the solemn ceremonial over, things began to wear their wonted calm yet cheerful sunshine.

"Look on this picture, and on this!" Bridlestone and Lawrenceville; Norah Burton and Hélena Greenspur; Norah about to be married, and Hélena returned from her wedding tour.

But first Norah: one evening shortly after Mr. Longfellow's death—it may have been that of the funeral, when we remember Blake dined at Bridlestone—Sir William proposed a walk in the garden to the jaded spirits and melancholy faces around him.

"It will do us all good," said the worthy Baronet cheerily, and accordingly they sauntered out.

Being far advanced into the spring, spreading leaves, odorous flowers, balmy airs, and carolling birds, lent their genial influence to that soothing twilight hour: every one seemed the better for it, indeed.

Sir William, with his widowed sister, and Miss Price leaning on Lucy Sandys, led the way: *it just so happened*, therefore, that the curate and Norah were left behind.

"Mr. Longfellow has made ample provision in his will for Norah," began Sir William, when the parties were sufficiently scattered to permit this introduction of private topics; "and, as I think I have discovered a certain preference lately working its way in the girl's mind, it is just as well that herself and her worthy choice should have means to carry out their project."

"But are you certain," asked Mrs. Longfellow interestedly, "that the regard is reciprocal?"

"Norah seems pretty certain of it!" returned the old gentleman drily.

"Well, I myself consider it not only likely, but desirable; it would be, in all

respects, a well assorted match, Mr. Blake is so excellent, and our dear Norah....."

Now let us fall back on No. 2:

"We should hear of them so far as Gibraltar, in another week, should we not?" asked Miss Price.

"I hope so; I dare say we shall, unless Wellesly be so new-fangled with his trip as to forget us completely," returned Lucy, pausing to disentangle the skirt of her dress from a straggling brier.

"Why, Lucy, my lass!" cried the old maid, with a jocose oscillation of her head, "what lover does *this* portend?—Who is there coming to marry you?"

Just at this moment a step, heard on the gravelled path behind them, caused both to look hurriedly round: it was only a footman.

"Whom do you want, Taylor?"

"I'm in search of the master, ma'am;

Mister Lawrence would wish to speak with him, if he pleases; and I'm to tell Sir William he wouldn't have called so late in the day, only it's very partic'lar."

"Very well; your master is a little further on," rejoined Miss Price; then, turning to her companion, she added:

"What can Henry Lawrence want so particularly, my love?—Do you think these distressing stories about Miss Violette have any truth in them?"

Miss Price, true to her sex, was a little bit inquisitive, and so it must be confessed was Lucy, who, in addition, blushed deeply, felt quite bewildered, and yet could not, for the life of her, show cause, unless—though this never went beyond a transient thought—that Henry Lawrence was distant but by the space of a few yards.

Things had not gone far enough yet

between them to connect *her*, in any degree, with the object of his mysterious visit; she felt *that* was painfully certain, and suggested, as an escape from her beating heart, that they should join Mrs. Longfellow during Sir William's absence.

"No, my dear; *I* shall go to my sister, while *you* had better search for Norah. Why, where *is* the girl?—she was close behind us but a minute since!"

"Has not Norah appropriated Mr. Blake?" returned Lucy, with a meaning smile; "and you cannot imagine that, *under the circumstances*," laying great stress on these words, "a third party would increase the pleasure of their *tête-à-tête!*"

"Well, you confirm my suspicions, my dear: now, just to think of it!—but it is the way of the world, Lucy, and natural, I suppose."

Miss Price, having no practical experience of such matters, refrained from further comment, and, after merely smiling a touch more benignly, they moved on to join the sable mourner.

Meanwhile, pair No. 3 are in the peach-house, and under the trellised vines; Blake demolishing a petunia, twitching terribly, and nervous to a degree; Norah keeping her head well down in demure but apparently resigned anticipation.

What with the atmospheric influence of the forcing-house, the increasing darkness, and the encouragingly helpless attitude of his flame, the Reverend Anthony, *con un motivo un piu crescendo*, finds himself able, after many palpitating efforts, to catch hold of a certain small hand, late the property of an Irish damsel, but about to come into his own possession, and, with little or no

resistance, to carry it to his lips; a smack, however intense, by no means romantic, immediately ensued, and, a few words of a tender but strictly confidential nature on *his* part having been responded to by a high and continuous pressure on *hers*, they left the grapes and peaches to their thermometer of 84° in the shade, and so, passing out, with their certificate of betrothal in their happy hearts, we bid them God speed!

Picture the second; Hélena Greenspur: Their honeymoon over, Captain and Mrs. Greenspur have returned to Lawrenceville, and Greenspur's mamma has departed, ostensibly to make preparations, on a splendid scale, for an early visit from her cherished darlings.

It is early in the morning, bare daylight, but the husband has not slept since cock-crow, is restless, and evidently chewing the

cud of some ill-digested suspicions, recently engendered as to the fortune of that beautiful innocent sleeper, who unconsciously smiles in her dream, as unaware of the true character of the cold-hearted ruffian to whom she devoted, not many days ago, her young life, "for better, for worse"—alas, for worse indeed!

Greenspur, as we have seen, had married her solely for gold; and himself, instead of being what he led her mother to believe him, was, at that very moment, involved not merely in difficulties of a pecuniary kind, but in embarrassments of a nature strongly prejudicial to his reputation as a gentleman, *nay, as an honest man*, and arising from certain disgraceful expedients to get clear of his debts, but the failure of which had only served to increase the odium and bankruptcy under whose stigma he lay.

With the straw-clenching credulity of despair, he lent himself, from his first effort at pouncing on Hélena Lawrence, to the idea of restoring at once his moral and monetary credit, by a marriage with one who, he had every reason to suppose, would inherit, in addition to a desirable fraction of her mother's property, the unpartitioned and immense wealth of her aunt, into whose house he had first traced her.

Balked, for the time, in his attempts to obtain a footing in her circle, he had patiently applied himself to play a deep game, into which his unscrupulous, Pharisaical mother was admitted for the purpose of trapping Mrs. Lawrence the more easily in his snare.

Long, long ago, there had existed a young-lady friendship between these now

mature and partially 'like-feathered widows. Relying on memory of it, and bringing good *materiel* to work—in fact, fighting the recluse with her own weapons—a letter, a most careful and sagacious letter, had been concocted by the joint efforts of the Greenspurs, mother and son, in which the historical reminiscence of the former was richly overlaid with invaluable biblical reflections, the handicraft of the latter, in which bygone scenes, affectingly recalled, were interlarded with deeply religious clap-trap, more consonant with present opinions, and thus calculated to hoodwink their object the more effectually.

This production, much too profane for us to transcribe, ran to the effect that Mrs. Greenspur had long contemplated the happiness of renewing the time-honoured acquaintance which existed between herself

and her invaluable Elinor (Mrs. Lawrence) in the years of their worldliness and levity; that, at last, an opportunity was afforded her, opposed by one circumstance simply, viz., the return from India of her only son, (whom she designated "a new creature") and who, enjoying a fine income, rising rapidly in the service, and heir to his mother's fortune, (she mentioned this under protest, as it was bitterly felt to be a miserable pittance) had come home to marry, and was merely waiting until some truly evangelical girl might appear—for such a match would alone be considered eligible.

"My precious child," concluded Mrs. Greenspur—by the precious child's dictation—"has adopted the motto of Joshua, 'as for him and his house.'"—We will not go further.

You can form no idea of the elaboration

of this feeler: but its results you have witnessed—he came, saw, conquered. And here be it declared, that the objection put craftily forth by the Captain's mother, as the solitary preventive to her visit, was, as it was intended to be, the precise recommendation which led Mrs. Lawrence to entreat them both to come: had there been no flourishing scion, I very much question if the profitless parent durst have billetted on her frugal entertainer for a single day; aware of which *quid pro quo* peculiarity, the invading party confidently compounded.

The most long-sighted, sharp-witted, cool-headed people are, notwithstanding, occasionally foiled; the biter is sometimes bitten; and poor Greenspur was egregiously deceived. In the full flush of his well-schemed victory, in the self-gratulatory elation at his success, the *possibility* that

his charming Hélena was *not* Aunt Penelope's heiress had totally escaped his reflection.

To the same degree, his mamma, who was pretty equally divided between dotage and dissimulation, and who, to say the least of it, required a little filial prompting to furbish up her wits, had been regularly humbugged—*humbugged by her own acuteness;* so that both, to use an expressive school phrase, were "stuck," or "sold."

Yet, even Fanchon, an old retainer, who should surely know all family secrets off by heart, had certified Hélena's golden prospects in the most unmistakeable manner, while every one in London talked of her as "the beautiful heiress." Over and over again he, Greenspur, had heard she was her aunt's adopted child, and so convinced was he of the truth of the report,

that it never occurred to him, when there was still time, to clinch the matter beyond a doubt.

Settlements, jointures, income, present and prospective—there would be lots of time to arrange these hereafter, and he never gave them more than a passing thought; the money was forthcoming, he felt certain, and, its owner once secured, trust him for getting it into his own hands!

CHAPTER II.

But to return. There he lies, tossing, sleepless, restless: his last weapon presented, and trigger pulled, has missed fire —his enemy will be down on him in a trice! Having surmised the cause, we must furnish the details.

On the previous night, when he and his heart's idol had retired to their chamber for the dark hours, Greenspur, loitering in a very unusual and anti-hymeneal manner, after an interval of silence, poked the fire, drew a chair, and, seating himself, placed his lady on his knee.

"Do you like Lawrenceville, Hélena?"

"Not very much," returned the bride.

"But so long as you are here, Herold....." she continued, looking amiably into his face.

"Oh, of course, dear," was his semi-sarcastic answer; "that is only natural: however, I cannot see a necessity of our remaining in obscurity any longer; you *don't*, neither do I, like it. So, unless you object, we need not await my remittances of pay, which are not due for another month, at least, as we can avail ourselves of some of your pin-money, my love, can we not, in the mean time?"

And this concluding suggestion was enforced by a kiss and affectionate squeeze. He was trying *to squeeze it out of her*.

"*My* money, Greenspur?" cried the unsuspecting wife, with astonishment—"*that* will not go far, dearest! Why, here"—disengaging herself, and ferreting a small

purse out of a drawer, "is all I have in the world!"

"Hem! come and sit down my love," from the husband. "You don't mean to tell me, little rogue, that your aunt's entire fortune can be stowed away so easily! Do you think me such a goose as to believe *that?*" patting her arms, and poking his nose into her cheeks, uxoriously.

"My aunt's fortune, Greenspur? *I* have nothing to say to it, I assure you; and much, indeed, to mamma's mortification; for Aunt Pen willed it *in toto*, to endow London charities, thus leaving me no better than I was: didn't you know that *before*, dearest?" she inquired, with the utmost artlessness.

"*Left it all to London charities!*" muttered Greenspur slowly through his teeth. "There!" pushing her rudely from him—

choose!" he added, in a hissing whisper of impotent but furious despair.

Poor Hélena heard him not, it was so best; she saw not his averted face, which, if it had but met her eyes, must have driven her mad: black with the hideous storm of rage, glaring, quivering, perspiring, losing its likeness to man—he might have been a fiend, a devil!

Frustrated, deluded, defeated, he closed his eyes, drew down his brows, and cursed himself—cursed himself for his short-sighted folly; scorpion as he was, he writhed with the agony of a self-inflicted sting. He beheld every hope, and plan, and project, utterly undone; and all because himself had taken no precaution—been the dupe of his own unproven surmise — marred his own plot! Oh, it was ruin, desperation, insanity! Bad as he had been before, in

pocket and prospects, he was now ten times worse. Oh, wretched, pitiful, unmasked, uncommiserated villain!

"Greenspur, my love, what are you doing?" asked Hélena, gently, as she peeped at his agitated figure from within her cosy, curtained couch.

"What is that to you, girl? If you utter another word, I'll....."

He was fully capable of executing any threat, just then.

The coarse language; the menacing stamp; the loud, untrammelled *new* voice; the gestures; and, above all, the sight of that terrible face; so paralysed, so stupified, his scared and wondering wife, that for some moments she became in a manner unconscious.

Gradually recovering, she betook herself to reflection, from reflection to tears—silent

as death, and quivering—then back again—and so on for a long time, and finally to sleep.

This was an unaccustomed world, this that haunted her in that night of fearful dreams! Peopled by murderers and desperadoes, and all kinds of horrible ogres, with rolling eyes, gnashing teeth, and a disposition to devour young girls. But it changed at last—the monsters were metamorphosed into friends—Aunt Pen, Lucy Sandys, and Henry; and Greenspur, marriage, and all, were clean forgotten.

Sleeping and smiling, and seeing visions much in this wise, her baffled and savage husband fumed by her side, until, a sudden thought seizing him, he started from his pillow, and proceeded to dress in vehement haste.

The noise of his creaking boots—creaking as they had never done in *that* house

before—woke Hélena. Did she forget his warning? Did the early hour mystify or her waking dream beguile her?

Just as he was hurrying from the room, she put forward her beautiful young face, fresh with every morning glow, and shaded by clusters of tossed and unfettered curls.

"Greenspur!"—She said no more.

Turning slowly round, with a steady, an awful stare, raising his hand, and pointing his finger, he shouted—ay, or howled—for it was the fury of a beast rather than of a man—

"Another word, and not Heaven itself shall save you! There—take that!"

And he struck her with the flat of his heavy sword, till, fainting, but more from affright than pain, she knew not that the brutal wretch was gone. Resuscitated consciousness, however, shortly supervening,

opened her tearful eyes not only to the streaming light of a brilliant rising sun, but to the heavy thunder-cloud which brooded over the day-spring of her life.

She began to discern, now, the real character of her husband—his identity, indeed, with the Greenspur of former days, as also his motive for laying cruel siege to her love: the shaven chin, the quiet, courteous *savoir vivre*, no longer could deceive—unmasked and bearded, as of yore, she saw him now!

Though unable to desire his return, for a moment she thought to have gotten back from his vitiating tenure those withered smiles, and that spurned, dishonoured, slighted fondness which, in the bigotry of her blind devotion, she had lavished on his unappreciating heart: but soon it was painfully felt that to do this she must recover from his gripe her marriage vows, her virgin

purity, her former self—impossible, alas, and vain!

Her season of trial was now arrived—now was she to reap the pestilential crop so eagerly sown by her mother's hand—now to taste the Oscar-like fruits[1] of that mother's grasping manœuvres, which had ripened into hollowness and delusion!

Many a day should come and go, and find and leave her thus desponding; nor did their heaviest effect appear at once; she was not able to realise her fate in all its soundings, with all its cause and consequence, that morning; but, merely quickened to a knowledge of how she had been tricked and outraged by her husband, and entrapped

[1] The Oscar is a fruit found on the shores of the Dead Sea, and is otherwise called the apple of Sodom—beautiful to the seeming, but to the mouth bitterness and dust. "The very core of these apples is of so combustible a quality, that the Arabs use it as tinder for their matchlocks."

by the guilty co-operation of her cousin, she came to obtain insight thus derivatively into the habits of Violette and of Violette's *troupe*.

Then, when so far unravelled, the thread of her tragic retrospection would fasten on the dingy widow, *her mamma*, and up into her throat would crowd the damning words: "*You* were the prime mover throughout; but for *you*, we had never met!"

So much for "filthy lucre." But where is Greenspur?

Early as it is, and no other soul in the huge old-fashioned mansion stirring, he has tramped with the same loud tread to the further end of that gloomy corridor, where was the chamber of Mrs. Lawrence, which, isolated like his own from those two main wings that were tenanted severally by Violette and the olive-branches, made up the cumbrous family pile.

Without a moment's hesitation, without premonitory knock—any feeling of delicacy, any consideration for the aged, though hitherto tough and sinewy female who harboured resignedly within—he wrenched the door-handle round, opened, entered, and, re-closing it with a bang, advanced to where already, and with unwonted emulation of the early bird, she was warbling a devout orison, with her face towards the window; her voice being somewhat out of tune, but her toilet completed, and herself evidently up for the day.

His violence aroused her. Turning round in affright, she cried, as her eyes fell on his savage scowl—

"What—what is the matter, Greenspur? —is anything wrong?"

"Wrong!" repeated the officer, in tones breathing contemptuous hate. "Sit down,

and I'll tell you. No puling now, madam, at your peril. I am here to put you through your catechism. And first answer me, as if it were your last dying word—did you, or did you not, all along, lead me to suppose that your daughter Hélena was her Aunt Penelope's heiress? Take care, now—no subterfuge, no falsehoods!"

And he articulated calmly, yet with emphasis, and latent ferocity.

"Why! what — what do you mean? What—what is that to you?" returned the widow, divided between evasion and fear.

"What is that to *me*, old woman? Dare you ask?—But," he continued, raising his voice, and half-unsheathing his sword—"I'll let you know!" Then, as if taking other counsel, he changed his tone. "Hark, queen of the hypocrites!"—and, to enforce a hearing, he caught her by the shoulders and

shook her, much as a terrier shakes a rat—"we have duped each other too long: it's all over, now, however—all—all: yet listen to *my* share of the *ruse* here, as I shall require presently a full and true explanation of *yours*.

"I came to Lawrenceville to marry your youngest girl: had she been as ugly as sin, or as yourself, she'd equally have served my turn; I believed her rich—which was what I cared for:—but to review my own history first. Ever since I was sixteen, debt and arrest have been my comrades, and it was only through a relative's influential interest that I was then rescued from jail, as my mother's plunderer, to be drafted into a foreign corps, as a poor cadet—my name being changed, and everything hushed up.

"Yet in India the same habits threatened similar misfortune: fifty times have I been on the verge of a court-martial, and as often,

by crafty dodging, escaped scot-free. Any wealthy fellow I could find I fleeced, and, when he dunned for re-payment, called him out.—You understand?

"After ten years passed in this way, I fell sick, and got furlough. Arriving in London, I happened to hear of Hélena as a great expectant heiress: the idea flashed across my mind to hunt her down, propose, be accepted, and pocket her thousands. I set to work deliberately, but Miss Lawrence's death quashed all my efforts for the time.

"Having gone into the country, on a visit to my mother, I chanced to tell her of my previous move, and found, to my surprise, that she was already acquainted with you. She knew more about you than *I* did. She said you were a *preaching* saint but *practising* impostor. We accordingly laid our train, and got into your house.

Fool that I was, I never suspected but that things would turn out as I wished them!

"We buttered you up with your favourite cant, threw dust in your eyes, and obtained your consent—no; first you asked my dam about my prospects, and that good Christian told you I was sure of dear knows how tremendous a testament at her death, did she not!"

"Ye—e—s," from the trembling and discomfited widow.

"She was a liar. I certainly got whatever she had once by filching; but it scarcely touched my fingers till gone.—Now, briefly, in conclusion, my pay is a hundred pounds less than I told you; and of this I barely handle what covers my regimental bill; *au reste, I swindle!*

"You know me now: I know *you* pretty

well; but have yet to obtain your answer as to whether, at any time or in any manner, you led me to believe that Hélena inherited her aunt's estate. Now, out with it, madam, out with it, or, by....."

"I—I—never, never did; never, as I'm a helpless woman—indeed, indeed, Greenspur!" blubbered the aspen-like bundle of crape.

"Do you intend, darling mother," he resumed, bending over her, and pinning her to the chair with both thumbs—"Do you intend to leave *your own* fortune to Hélena? Now, no nonsense: I won't smother you; wouldn't for the world—so answer quick!"

"Let me go, and I will. I—I can't breathe!"

"Stand up, and make haste, then, do!"

The widow rose, in obedience, and, glancing nimbly round, seized the bell-rope, and

pulling it violently, screamed, with a mixture of terror and desperation—

"Not a penny, you heartless fellow!"

"Ha! ha!" he resumed, bitterly, "*you* to talk of heartlessness—and your daughter forced, ay, *forced*, to marry a gambler, a *roué*, a cheat! You to talk of villany—and your son betrothed by your own edict to your dishonoured niece! There lie, and there rot! Perdition light on yourself, and your breed! Amen! amen!"

And he turned away from the prostrate widow, whom his iron fists had felled, fainting, to the floor; then, clasping his hands in awful imprecation, was gone.

A moment sent him hurrying towards the village inn; in another hour, himself and his luggage had started by the morning train for London. We dare not, as at the end of our former picture, bid him God speed.

CHAPTER III.

Lawrenceville was convulsed; even Elinor and Susan betrayed considerable excitement during that day. Hélena's room is darkened, and Henry sits soothing her, and whispering by her side.

As for Violette, she has talked about nothing else, sympathized feelingly with Greenspur, and in vain attempted to emulate the outrageously exuberant spirits of her *bonne*.

Fanchon, delighted with the *dénouement*, overjoyed to hear of *Ma'mselle Hélène's malheur*, and venting *éclats de rire*, without limit, at the thought of *la Veuve's mauvais*

succès, and the *Capitaine's méprise*, will not be called to order, and Fanchon rules the roast.

Mrs. Lawrence has been raving, storming, laughing, crying—quite beside herself since the *exposé*—blaming Hélena for the marriage, and exonerating her own righteous person from any share in the transaction; sending for the dispensary leech, and anon countermanding his attendance from a reviving regard for economy; threatening to brand Greenspur in the papers as a monster, and the next instant forbidding one syllable of the *fracas* to be carried beyond her gates; in fact, vapouring, after the fashion of weak, selfish, ridiculous, outgeneralled, women, all the world over.

Nevertheless, it were vain to deny that Mrs. Lawrence has been shaken—not alone by Greenspur, which was good exercise—

but by the events of this ill-fated union —by the unexpected turn things have taken —by finding, in fact, she has lent herself, might and main, to marry her daughter to a sharper, a profligate, a dissembler, a pauper, to altogether a very undesirable son-in-law;—Mrs. Lawrence has been shaken considerably.

When people, and particularly widows, come to her time of life, and meet with adversity, it generally lays its hand heavily upon them, frequently to such a degree that, during the residue of their pilgrimage, its effects cannot be unshouldered, or its inroads repaired.

It will not be too much to say that, about this period, a certain noticeable cloud began to steal over the matron—a certain warning voice to ring its changes in her ears, stupifying, and rendering her

crazy, influencing her temper to an unpleasant extent, regulating her general tone on a scale considerably above *concert pitch*, and, though the wrinkles were there, utterly routing her resignation.

We leave her, growing rapidly older and sterner, and follow Henry to Bridlestone.

Sir William, hastening to his, at all times, welcome visiter, opens noiselessly the library door, and is met by the hand of a pale and melancholy youth, in whose face he scarce could discover young Lawrence's identity.

"Why, bless me, what can be the matter!" cried the Baronet, affrightedly; then, remembering his own family bereavement, he added—

"But, my dear fellow, we look upon it as a mercy; poor Longfellow was so wearisome a burden, not only to all around him,

but even to himself, that we must look upon it as a positive mercy."

"You have my sympathy for his loss, and I could not have been able to deny myself, longer than to-morrow, the satisfaction of offering that sympathy, had not a sad—oh! how much sadder and darker —*a terrible trial*—driven me to infringe on the formalities due to a house of mourning, that, at once and before other tongues should tell a less accurate tale, I might lighten my mind of half its grief and suffering, by securing your advice, and obtaining, oh, my best friend—my more than father—your commiseration! You have heard of my poor, unfortunate sister's return to Lawrenceville with—with her husband?"

"Yes; pray sit down, Henry, my boy; your sister, Hélena....."

"That husband turns out to be *an im-*

postor!" laying bitter emphasis on the term.

"An impostor!—why, dear me, Blake was speaking so highly of him—Greenspur, I think—only this afternoon."

"Ay, an impostor of the deepest dye!" repeated Henry: "by assuming, for his own selfish purposes, a character which it were blasphemy to name in the same breath with him—that of a Christian—he utterly deceived, beguiled, actually charmed my mother—Hélena herself—Mr. Blake—indeed, all of us. He is a villain, sir—a villain, by his own showing; and, alas, alas! although he has left us, and probably for ever, he is still my brother, and the husband of my sister."

Overpowered by the flood of agonizing thoughts which came full and recent on his memory, he walked hastily to the

window, and attempted to hide his rising tears.

Sir William carried a heart large enough for twenty: following the young man, and lightly laying an arm on his drooping shoulder, he whispered calmly and solemnly:

"Look out!"

Henry raised his eyes, and beheld—there were Miss Price, Mrs. Longfellow, Norah and Anthony, besides, though *he* saw none but—Lucy Sandys.

"We are all mourners together," resumed the Baronet. "You must remain, Harry, for tea; you are sadly out of sorts, and, God knows, no wonder! But how does the poor girl bear it?"

"Oh, she is weeping and composed, by turns; and so good and so loving!"

Henry was overpowered again.

"And your mother," continued Sir Wil-

liam, making believe to take no notice of what was not meant to be seen.

"Is like a maniac," returned the other, "wild and furious; disappointed beyond description in Greenspur, yet scarcely casting a glance of pity on the real sufferer, her child!"

And then he found himself sufficiently collected to go into the whole history, *so far as he knew it*, of courtship, marriage, discovery, and disappearance.

"I came," he remarked in conclusion, "more particularly to ask you, if you think we ought to take any steps with regard to this officer?"

"None, whatever; decidedly, none!" interruptingly cried the old man. "You have got rid of him, and, at any cost, must congratulate yourselves thereat: never see, hear of, or name him more! the sooner

such an one is forgotten the better—the rascal!—but," he added, subjugating at once his honest choler, "we will discuss it together at leisure; let us descend, for the present, to the parlour; it is a dark room, and the ladies prefer it to-night."

"Say nothing of this till I am gone, Sir William, when I should like you to inform your sisters, and....." he stopped short.

"And what?—whom?" inquired the other, unwittingly.

"And—Mr. Blake."

Henry was very near unbagging his cat, which would have been out of place at such a time.

Down they went, down they sat to tea, and, by some "accidentally-on-purpose" arrangement, Henry occupied the chair at the tea-maker's right hand, that official

happening to be Lucy, *vice* Miss Price, whose nerves were not equal, after their recent efforts, to the task.

Now, such of my readers as understand tea-making, must be aware of the facilities presented, during the transaction of that convivial pastime, for a certain interchange of ideas and sentiments between the lady at the urn and the gentleman beside her.

Whether it be that this urn, with its circumambient cups, ewers, and sugar heaps, serves as a convenient screen, or that its hissing and bubbling waters effectually outvie those whisperings which are suggested, somehow or other, by its presence, there can be no mistake about the influence it exercises, the colour it lends to the conversation, and the important results which may develop themselves in its vicinity. Suffice it that, upon the passing occasion, Miss

Price and her brother were too much devoted to soothing Mrs. Longfellow, and Norah and Anthony to a subdued undercurrent of rather melancholy, however fervent, flirtation, to give any heed to that watery rendezvous, with its *sotto voce* vocal entertainments, which ended, as they rose from the table, in a mutual resolve, the lady to walk over, the next day, to Lawrenceville, for the sole purpose, *of course*, of seeing Hélena Greenspur, and the lover to chaperon the amiable sympathizer to and fro'.

I don't know, exactly, whether Mrs. Longfellow had ever let slip, in the presence of her relatives, any hint as to that preference, of which, as existing on *one* side at least, we have shown her, some time ago, to be aware: certainly Sir William and the spinster began to look very complacently on

Henry's visits—by no means angelic, in point of paucity—and betook themselves, in their quiet evening walks, to such public and uninteresting spots as seemed least likely to attract the young neighbours, either on sentimental or seclusive grounds.

Once or twice Miss Price committed herself so far as to remark what a desirable thing it would be to see Henry Lawrence suitably wedded, and to follow this up immediately with some high eulogium in favour of "our sweet Lucy Sandys."

The Baronet hemmed in acquiescence, and both dropped the subject, evidently from a unanimous, though tacit understanding, that any further venture would be injudicious just then.

They agreed to put no questions either to Chloris or Corydon, at this preliminary stage, nor yet to interfere with their *tête-à-*

tête saunterings in the woods and along the river sides, feeling sure that, come what might, Lucy was safe from harm, or suspicion of it, with Henry Lawrence: and so they thought it best to bide their time.

CHAPTER IV.

We will just take a peep at Wellesly's sister and Wellesly's chum, in this stilly twilight, as they somewhat slowly turn their footsteps home.

It is no harm that Lucy's tiny hand reposes within the tender pressure of his elbow on the side next his heart! Henry carries a considerable walking-stick, all over knobs; quite a modern appendage, dating no further back than the occasion of Lucy's visit to Hélena, as chronicled above. Zealous fellow! he prides himself in the conceit that this sturdy oaken cudgel is effectual to keep all prying folks at bay; but he

is wrong, for we are watching him, and worse than we—*Fanchon.*

Yes; as the tigress, with the greedy glare of certified prey, crouches on her paws, and stills her exultation, while the unsuspecting hind feeds, within springing distance, on that herbage which anon must be spattered by its blood — so Fanchon dodged and lurked among the shrubs, her deep eyes dancing beneath their brows with fiendish fire. She was mad with rapture: here was everything just to her heart's content — Master *Henri faisant la cour* to *Ma'mselle Lucile Sandees;* jilting his mother's selection in the most unmistakeable manner; and the object of his undutiful affection reposing on his arm, looking into his eyes with an evident reciprocity of soul. Oh, it was all as she had fondly hoped it might be!

"Mais de quoi parlent-ils?" thought the *bonne*, carefully stealing on their steps, to ascertain.

"And how do you manage all day, Lucy? Now that Wellesly is gone, and Miss Burton so constantly at the curate's schools, the hours must hang heavily enough."

"No," returned the happy girl, calmly, yet readily; "I keep a journal for Wellesly of everything that goes on, hereabouts, and I think of absent friends, and stroll into the poultry-yard with Sir William; and so the evening comes round."

"And you like the evening, Lucy—like it well, don't you?"

"Yes; I *always* liked it," was her reply, unwilling to be driven into an awkward corner.

"But you have increased that liking lately; have you not?" demanded Master

Pertinacity, with a very warm squeeze of her imprisoned hand.

"Why, no—yes—you see, summer is coming in so winsomely, so vastly more enjoyable than shivering spring, that—but pray let me ask, in return"—and she felt she had the best of it now—"how do *you* beguile the mornings? Not smoking, I hope, with Hassan?"

"No; not much of that, lately: I am generally to be found in the music-room, at the piano, or with my guitar: my old trade, you know, music—and what better?"

"You teaze me for ever with your tales from the Arabian Nights: shall I tell you," rejoined Lucy, "where they most remind me of yourself?"

"Where, so please you, dearest?" asked the lover, as he drew her to a rural seat, and looked into her blushing face intently.

"You remember the passage—'He sang with a voice that would stay the birds in the midst of heaven?'"

"My memory is as perfect as your flattery, Lucy."

"Flattery!" returned the maiden, in some surprise—"the term has no application, with reference to *your* performance, Henry. I could not flatter, an' I would."

"Well, well," said Henry, playing all manner of difficult yet thrilling melodies on his companion's fingers, and not one of which escaped the eagle glance of Fanchon, "there is no denying my passion for music, my devotion to it, and my knowledge, perhaps a pretty intimate knowledge, of it: 'Music,' saith my book of homilies, 'is to some people like food, and to some like a remedy, and to some like a fan.'"

"I am warm with our ramble," returned

the lady, coquettishly—which was rather a venture for *her*—"I pray you, fan me."

Her bright petitioning smile brooked no refusal, and a pause of a few moments was succeeded by a burst of magnificent vocalisation, which in turn died away into the echoes, till naught remained but the tears of rapture that flowed to its tuneful and plaintive sound.

"Beautiful! and I know who has the credit of the words; but the music—I never heard anything to equal it: is it Schubert's, Henry?"

"It is the impromptu venture of an unknown composer," answered Henry, attempting to laugh off his, what has been designated, *demon*.

"Is it *yours?*" asked Lucy, in ecstasy.

"Amen!" was his laconic reply; then, after a short interval—"I will bring my guitar to-morrow, if you choose: we have

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not treated it to an *al fresco* tinkle for a very long time."

"Oh, yes; don't forget it, Henry, for your life!"

Never fear: he was not likely to forget anything *she* told him.

"Hark! the tea-bell! we are late," resumed the youth. "Here, take my arm."

Away they went—away, but in an opposite direction, went Fanchon. *They* were happy, *she* was happy: *they* in their pure love, *she* in her ripening plot.

"I wonder what mamma would think of us, Lucy?" suggested Henry, with a merry laugh, as they hied along.

"Has she no suspicions, then?" asked his companion, raising her eyebrows archly.

"None: you forget she is bent on my marrying Violette."

"And you?"

"For God's sake, don't mention it, my dear love! You cannot surely suppose me capable of such infatuation."

"Mais pourquoi non? the demoiselle is very 'witching: I met her on the downs but yesterday, driving her ponies, and looking lovely."

"You met her, did you? Well, Lucy, another time *keep out of her way!*" returned the young man, seriously, almost sternly.

Lucy was a woman, after all.

"What can you mean, Master Mystery?" she asked, patting his arm, and obstructing his progress: "she doesn't bite, does she? —or has she the plague?"

"*She has!*" he interposed, emphatically: "she is infected, polluted, *bad:* I can tell you no more, but I don't exaggerate; and, for the sake of all that is good and pure, keep out of her way!"

With feminine perception, Lucy saw the fearful meaning of her lover's reserved yet earnest caution, and, unable to repress an icy shudder, she leaned heavily on her faithful counsellor for support, as he hurried his precious burthen through the trees.

Another pause, and a silent, but oh, how burning, trustful kiss! and a turn in the pathway has brought them to the mansion door.

There was no further happiness for Lucy, *that* evening: her gentle heart bled for the ill-starred Violette. Henry having returned to Lawrenceville shortly after tea, she pleaded indisposition, and hastened to commune with herself in her sleeping-room.

Had *she* done anything towards the dreadful condition of this poor French child?—No; she felt sure she had not. Had Henry?—No, no! Mrs. Lawrence?—No; she was

too pious for that. Then, who had?—No answer. Could any thing be done for her *now*—something to rescue, to reform her?

That was a gloomy night in Lucy Sandys' chamber.

Fanchon bounced into her mistress's apartments, lividly out of breath, but drunk with joy: Violette, unable to make her out, accused her of too liberal an application to the *eau de vie* bottle, which the Abigail usually wore slung, under cover, to a convenient article of her dress, and began to get cross.

"Point de secrets entre nous, Fanchon: savez vous donc des nouvelles?"

"Mais non, m'amselle; mais point de tout!" returned the bonne, pertly, while with a loud and boisterous laugh she continued—"Ah, mon Dieu, que je suis heureuse!—mon bonheur est parfait!"

"Merci!" cried Violette, rising from her sofa, and almost weeping with rage: "n'avez vous pas honte, Fanchon? C'est bien mal de vous. Je ne le suffrirai plus: fi donc!"

"Mais vous etes d'une humeur affreuse, ma'mselle!" was the bonne's answer, drawled out with the most provocative coolness.

"C'est un mensonge, je le nie entièrement!"

"Dere; dat vill do," resumed the privy councillor, soothingly—"no more vat you call de bully: Master Henri has fall into love of Mees Sandess!"

"Bah! is that all! *that* to make a fuss about!" cried Violette, derisively, as she flung herself down upon the eider pillows.

"Vous changerez bientôt d'opinion, m'amselle!" persisted the bonne, sitting beside, and almost whispering to her charge—"we can write a *lettre:* we can say Monsieur

Henri vat you call *jeelt* ma'mselle—vous a été trompé, we can prove, sans doute, for I see dem kees an' hoog!"

"Well?"

"Well, madame tink no use to rapporter, dat's all: we can go to Paris, and madame never see us no more!"

And she patted her deluded victim with the hand that had dragged her to her ruin.

It was cat and mouse. Crafty Fanchon! —Miserable Violette!

CHAPTER V.

An interval of six weeks: the steamer approaches that beautiful Indian isle. After a severe struggle in the billows of Biscay, when the hatches were battened down—a most needless precaution, not one of the passengers being able to stir—the engines stopped, and the skylights annihilated, our Governor's party contented themselves with a descriptive epitome of the Portuguese coast, as represented by their respective stewards, male and female—a race of hirelings gifted with untiring conversational powers—and it was not until the anchor rattled out before Gibraltar, and profound

calm enabled the lords of creation to shave without rasping their chins, that Sir Geoffry, considerably reduced by the maritime events of a subduing week, managed to emerge into light and activity, with anything but a firm foot or radiant complexion.

As for Madeline, when she stumbled to the mirror, and viewed herself in all the *unstudied abandon* and unbecoming *negligé* of nautical indisposition, she almost realised a natural faint; and, had not the lady waiter assured her that everybody else was looking still more seedy, and especially that Miss Hamlyn was "quite hawful," nothing would have induced her to expose her fallen condition to the spiteful gaze of her fellow-creatures: as it was, she appeared on deck with a rich veil drooping over, so as effectually to shroud, the bilious white-washed cheeks once roseate and attractive;

and, what with flounces, crinoline, and parasol, Madeline, all but the face, was splendid as of yore.

Florence came forward to speak to her. Alas, alas! that evil-minded stewardess had been perpetrating *fibs*. Alas, alas! Florence, although a little pale, was looking her very dead best.

"Papa proposes a party to dine and sleep on shore: of course you will come?"

"Of course I *won't!*" was the sulky rejoinder.

"Pilkington, you shall remain with me. Desire Sir Geoffry to send off a quantity of flowers and fruit, and whatever is worth having, directly he lands; you must go without me, Florence."

In spite of filial reverence, it must be confessed that our blooming favourite had no difficulty in repressing such tears as, at

this prospect of separation, may here have been inclined to rise.

Sir Geoffry, meanwhile, was becoming impatient.

"Where is Sandys, Flo'? he takes a terrible time to dress."

"I shall search him out," returned the girl, and she tripped blithely down the cuddy stairs.

Just as she entered the saloon, he met her; met her after a whole weary week's incarceration—it was as life to the dead!

Not words would come to tell their mutual joy; but, oh! what speaking glances, tender smiles! what pressure of hands, throbbing of hearts!—it was a meeting too blessed for words!

The heroine recovered first.

"Papa waits for you, Mr. Sandys: we are going ashore."

"I was finishing this hasty note to Lucy," said the Secretary, in explanation of his absence, "it being out of the question to attempt it sooner; but I hope you have not been long detained?"

"Oh, no; this way," she continued, with an irrepressible laugh, as the tottering chevalier staggered feebly towards the engines.

"I am quite *hors de combat*," Wellesly remarked, as he strove hard to recover his pristine stability.—So he was.

And now they are gone on shore, are walking on the Prado, purchasing tremendous bouquets, and pursued by a squadron of orange-boys, smoking cigars.

Now, having mounted mules, they clamber up those perpendicular streets, and visit the fortifications, Sir Geoffry in great good spirits, thorough-bred old soldier as he was, at the sight of so much English power,

and explaining everything to his daughter, who made all kinds of sly faces aside for the edification of Wellesly, but looked as knowing and interested as possible, out of compliment to her father's military strictures.

You are tired of the Rock: four days later they steamed into La Valette, and Madeline, having met with a millpond sea and a handsome cavalry officer, appears without veil, and with resuscitated charms.

Five days later, and they landed at Alexandria, where Madeline and her cavalry friend, hiring a couple of dashing Arab horses, whisked about in a very noticeable style.

Then up the canal and river to Cairo; Madeline's spirits increasing with the temperature, Pilkington getting nothing to do, the cavalry officer never absent from his post.

Poor old Sir Geoffry looks somewhat fretted and out of sorts, but of course the change of climate is telling upon him; yet he still manages to smile when his Florence appears. Poor old Sir Geoffry!

Into Cairo, where Madeline purchases a quantity of gew-gaws *orientales*, Pilkington a pipe, and Wellesly another bouquet—from the Pacha's garden too—for Florence.

Sir Geoffry shuts himself up for a sleep; Madeline and the cavalry officer gallop to the citadel; Pilkington, donkey, and dragoman, experimentalize a Turkish bath; and the Secretary and Florence, not feeling in the least degree slighted or lonely, sit chatting on the balcony, breathing the evening air, and altogether the happiest couple of the lot.

And now over the Desert, where Lady Hamlyn makes herself very disagreeable,

because the General has insisted on the sixth seat being occupied by my lady's maid, and not, as my lady had intended, by the cavalry man—and so into Suez.

On board at once, and down the Red Sea to Aden. A gallop to camp—Madeline and friend—a tiffin with her Majesty's rollicking —th, and a vast deal of admiration excited.

"I say, Jones, wish we had such a Bloomer here!"

"Ah!" from Jones; which may mean anything, Jones being the regimental oracle.

Bang! goes the first signal gun—I hope they won't be late! No; for Madeline rides like—like a somāūlee, and keeps time.

Another signal—Hormanjee Gooseberryjee rushes franticly on board, with an armful of hotel bills; I O U's for soda-water, beer, and games of billiards.

Another, and the last gun: anchor up, paddles bite, off she goes. Hormanjee hurries down the gangway, promissory notes and all. Good by, Hormanjee—poor fellow!

Ten days of blue and waveless ocean, here and there an island, now and then a whale, never a breeze. Ten days of lolling on mats, dozing on skylights, flirting under a tarpaulin, dancing at nightfall; then a rising sun, purple hills, misty shores, cocoa-nut topes, and the steamer has moored off that beautiful Indian isle.

CHAPTER VI.

Return we to Lawrenceville. It is morn —morn in the springy-summery month of May. A prostrate figure shows on the stone steps, below Henry's windows. The early sun plays on his snowy turban, and gilds his flowing robes.

Undisturbed by the still slumbering household, Hassan tells his beads, and strokes his beard before his God. Rising, having laved his hands, he arranges himself for a reflective pipe. Shall we attempt to represent in words what he signified in whiffs? Hassan had a shrewd and clear head—we cannot do better than follow him:

"Oh, to be free, and away again in my own country! away from the trouble that *is* come, and that *will* come, for the clouds look black and charged—away from this Bedlam, whose portress is run stark mad—mad since her daughter's return, but madder since her niece's flight. This is no place for my master, with his 'forehead like the new moon, his figure like the letter *aleef*'—his warm heart, and cheery smile! Oh, my master, 'if beauty came to be compared to thee, it would hang down its head in shame.' Allah, look kindly on thee, noble soul, for as my very life I love thee!

"She thought to choose a wife for him, she did—and such a one!—than whom the worst of the Ghawàzee were chaster! What an evil to escape, to be sure—what a mother to have!"

A moment replenished his hhàgar, when he resumed—

"My master is in love, his sleep is broken, his soul is charred by the glowing eyes of that damsel at Bridlestone; for *her* he neglects *me*—it is no longer 'Hassan, come tell me of Cairo and Thebes.' No; I might as well be dead! Yet is she lovely, as lovely, in truth, as a virgin of Paradise!

"I have seen them at nightfall, sitting under the trees, her hand in his, his eyes making sunshine; while patting her on the cheek, he was 'kissing her mouth like a pigeon feeding its young.' Twin angels, Wallahi! He with his eloquent looks and music-making voice; she, white and pure as the mountain snow.

"And still he seems afraid to bring her home—for why?" thought Hassan, hastily

abandoning his chibouque: "his mother would have forced him to marry that Frank girl, because she was made of gold;—is my master's lady poor? I see it now; she *is*, and his mother hinders! Well, truly has it been written, 'the sentinel of El Gēnneh sent him forth from his abode for fear that the houris might be tempted!'"

A clapping of hands here ended the Dragoman's soliloquy, and called him away to dress Henry.

Violette and Fanchon are indeed gone! Lawrenceville will never see either of them more. A fortnight has passed since their flight, during which time Mrs. Lawrence, beside herself with rage, yet unable to decipher the cause of her niece's departure—knowing nothing, but that she has cleared out, bonne, Grignon, and all—denied audience to every one, save a servant maid;

and, with closed shutters and bolted doors, raved, and stormed, and knelt to curse her orphan ward, whose life of misery she herself, by her negligence and short-sighted avariciousness, had, if not directly caused, culpably taken no steps to oppose.

Yes, Mrs. Lawrence; you may well refuse comfort, there is none for you; no comfort, no pity; you deserve this bitter cup, and you must drink it!

The post has brought a foreign letter, addressed to the old lady in question, and bearing the Paris stamp. Breaking it open, and trembling and tottering, and unable to read—for her eyes have failed, she is altogether worn away of late—she shakes it significantly at her maid, bidding her declare its drift, without delay.

Supporting herself against the bed, the ghastly, palsied imbecile heard as follows—

"Madam—This is from your injured, insulted, *jilted* niece: from one whose too confiding, too blindly loving and devoted heart has been trifled with, mocked, broken! It will tell you of my being in France, of my determination never to see any of you more, and never more to set foot in England.

"You need not attempt, madam, either to reason or force me into a change of purpose; *I would sooner cut my throat than change;* but, should such infatuation seize you, I can lull it for ever to rest by the assurance that circumstances have placed me in such a position, have compelled me to adopt such a means of livelihood, as already to preclude the possibility of your acknowledging me as your relative again.

"Suffice it, I am at this moment under

the protection of a French Comte: you know what I mean; but you shall also know the cause, the origin, the author of my fall: Madam, *look for it in your own son!* Henry Lawrence, *the accepted suitor of Miss Sandys!* Eternally, adieu! No longer your niece,

"VIOLETTE."

There was no need for more; the work was done; Mrs. Lawrence sank insensible into her servant's arms. Bells were rung, attendants and children flew, the doctor was summoned, and his lancet unsparingly applied: at last, the old withered throat heaved with returning breath, and thus that pregnant day passed by.

Nothing transpired to account for the attack; Mrs. Lawrence's maid knew the value of her place too well to trust her

tongue; so people began to say that the good widow was gradually settling down into the darkling abyss of death, with all her good deeds lighting her through the shadowy vale; and this report spread pretty generally throughout the village hearths that night.

A different tale, however, was to be told within some hours.

The morning rose; Hassan had prayed, and Henry dressed, when a message was delivered to the latter, desiring his instant appearance in the maternal presence.

"Oh, is mamma so much revived, then? I'm sure I'm heartily glad to hear it!"

"Revived, Master Henry?—she is *wild!*"

The Mercury might have gone further—she was *mad!*

Yet, when her son advanced to where she lay, that formerly strong-minded wo-

man was able to say, calmly, distinctly, almost frigidly—

"Henry Lawrence, get you gone from *my* habitation, for ever: I have disinherited —I disown, and, I may add, forget you: you are no longer anything to me. Go, go! Unite yourself to Lucy Sandys, and be pitiful beggars together. Go; you are *now* safe from the girl you have ruined—the mother you have murdered—the lot you have despised. Go; without remonstrance, a word, a sign!

"There, on that table, is your father's will; it entitles you to a hundred and fifty pounds; take it, for I cannot keep it from you: now, begone, and may a mother's curse follow you, to blight and poison your journey through the world!"

He obeyed: pausing to kiss his sisters, to say something kind—but he had no

power, his voice would not do his bidding —to Hélena. He made Hassan understand, somehow or other, what had happened, and that soft-hearted fellow began assiduously to blubber and to pack.

In fine, having shouldered his guitar-case, which was more than usually heavy that morning, he departed for Bridlestone, carrying with him what little stock of courage he could muster.

Yes; the moment he saw how matters stood, it was to Bridlestone that his magnet pointed: he never thought twice about it. Off he set; up the avenue he trudged, like a poor minstrel boy that he was, his knees knocking together, his back bent, and his face deadly pale. It was quite a pity to see him, good, honest, noble fellow, in such case, suffering for the sins of others, and trying, under all, to bear up.

Lucy and Norah are standing at the window, watering the mignonette, waiting for breakfast, and the earliest dressed: looking out afar, amid the spreading beeches, the former descries her crest-fallen knight; another certifying glance, and away she hies to meet him—away, with her ringlets floating, heart jumping, pulse dancing, lips parting, away, to meet him!

Norah remains to infuse tea, to wish it had been Anthony instead, and to hope for better luck next time.

But those twain; they backed, and hid among the clustering boughs, and wept their very hearts into fountains; oh, such tears, such loving tears—so sad, so true!

We dare not try to tell their explanation; indeed, there was not much to tell; they knew each other's case and state intuitively

—all youngsters in their position do—and sympathy required no statement.

At last, it was resolved to secrete the guitar-case under some convenient brushwood, to get their swollen eyes and blistered cheeks into some kind of order, and to march, man and maid, at a regulated interval, upon Bridlestone. I cannot agree to the motive power having been appetite for breakfast.

Lucy appeared first, and it required no very impertinent scrutiny to observe that she had been giving vent to tears. Mrs. Longfellow, by this time rid of that selfish grief which, under any circumstances, a devoted wife will, during the first days of widowhood, feel, had almost succeeded in calling off general attention from the stricken damsel, of whose confidence she proved herself so worthy; when the door opened—

not so wide and dashingly as usual—and another melancholy and still more tell-tale apparition was welcomed as Henry Lawrence by the wondering and anxious looks of this circle of friends.

Little they said during breakfast, each being too much taken up with his or her own thoughts: with those already aware of the recent event, in which they had personally so painful an interest, there was too positive an amount of suffering to smother it under any artifice of a conversational nature; with those who were still in ignorance, but whom it could not escape that something unusually ominous, something eventful, some crisis, had arisen, there was too generous a sense of delicacy to attempt to break that silence, to do more than perceive and pity.

Breakfast, therefore, soon passed by;

the ladies, gathering round Lucy, vacated the room, and Henry and the Baronet were left together.

After the servants had appeared and disappeared, and Sir William had placed a chair beside his own for Henry, after the case was heard, and the young man's head had sunk upon his breast, that good old gentleman rose, and saying—"Excuse me for an instant, and await me here, my boy" —withdrew.

He was scarcely gone, when Mrs. Longfellow and Lucy entered, the former struggling to wear her usual pleasant, hearty face, the latter hiding hers completely.

The matron, with her pretty burden clinging to her side, advanced gently, and gently stooped, and gently kissed, for the first time in her life—the sympathy of sor-

row discards cold etiquette—the forehead of the nearly unconscious outcast.

"Cheer up, Henry dear! I've heard it all from Lucy here; but you must not give way thus; things will look better, soon, please God!"

The young man raised his eyes; they were lit with a gleam of hope, lit by those welcome words of comfort.

"Has Lucy, then, really told you *all?*" he inquired, with a meaning emphasis and smile: Lucy looked down on the Turkey carpet.

"I think *I* know most of Lucy's secrets, Henry; and of such as have this morning transpired, I cannot say that I disapprove. In fact, I came back that at once I might congratulate you both: you see it is a gloomy night that has no star; and, though there is much to lament in the conduct of

your mother, there may be more than an equivalent happiness in the promise elicited, by Mrs. Lawrence's ill-advised severity, from a heart whose inclinations I have suspected some time—this fluttering little heart which I hold within my arms!"

And the worthy lady held her still more closely to her breast.

It was true, what she had said. Yes; that very morn, among the beechen trees, and amid showers of loving tears, they had pledged their troth, those twain!

At this interesting crisis, the door reopened, and Sir William, with Miss Price and Norah, entered.

It was evident, from the jolly bachelor's face, that, in his absence, he had been admitted, by his smirking sister, to a view of the sunnier side of the picture.

Miss Price made a nimble run at the *affiancée*, dived, amid many curls, in search of her rosy mouth, patted her a good deal, and, kerchief in hand, madly skipped into a corner.

Norah, in her own uncouth, but honest way, cried, and laughed, and congratulated promiscuously, and, momentarily expecting the world's end—seeing that marrying and giving in marriage were becoming the rule at Bridlestone—looked out of the window for Anthony.

As for the master, he took the lovers by the hand—

"God bless you both! keep up your spirits, that's the main point. 'Pon my honour, I'm delighted."

Sir William never kissed anybody, having a celibatory objection to the weakness: letting them loose, he turned to the al-

ready revived, and no longer colourless, Henry, and, in a confidential whisper, added—

"Miss Price desires me to say, you must consider yourself her guest; she has already given orders about your room; and I have sent Hassan to superintend its arrangement: make yourself at home, in every respect; Bridlestone is to be your head-quarters until Fortune smiles more propitiously; and to-morrow, having left her time to cool, I will ride over to Lawrenceville, and endeavour to bring your mother to reason.

"And now, sister," he pursued, raising his voice to its usual cheerful pitch, "bring Norah along with you; we will leave the happy couple for an hour or so to themselves.

"God bless you both!" he cried, turning

round, with an encouraging wave of the hand, "for a fine, loveable pair, again say I!"

Exeunt.

CHAPTER VII.

Three months have come and gone, and the green is verging upon the sere and yellow leaf. Many changes have taken place among our friends—some for better, some for worse; in Norah and Anthony's case, for both—they are man and wife.

Dear, dear, what a happy couple, to be sure! it makes me quite jealous to see them!

Yesterday evening they started for London, *en route* to the Continent, where they purpose having a year's fun, being charged by Sir William to go the grand tour, as

absolutely essential, in *his* opinion, to a lawful marriage.

All the school children turned out to cheer them as they drove from the glebe house, and at the station an inconvenient crowd of farmers and farmers' wives assembled to do them honour.

Anthony was quite a pet with his rural flock—such a cheerful, affectionate creature! Nothing gloomy or starched about him, save his coat and bands. His is a living, not a moping or whining faith, and the very furthest remove from ascetism. Anthony is no Calvinist, and every one likes him.

Norah, whose face has not the *mis*fortune to be her fortune, lends a helping hand to her partner's worldly prospects, Mr. Longfellow having bequeathed a handsome provision to this intrinsic though but partially polished gem.

They wanted Lucy to make one of their party; but, for reasons best known to herself, that desolate spinster declined. Desolate? you ask. Yes; desolate, I write; for Henry is no longer by her side. Patience: read this letter:—

"Queen's House, C——, July 17, 18—.

"My own darling, sweet sister—What a brute that old Mother Lawrence has been! What a change for Henry! How I pity him! Remember me to him a thousand times: but I was quite forgetting to congratulate *you*, indeed *you both*—for I don't know which is the more fortunate. Yet your last letter was so divided between joy and sorrow, between happiness with Henry and grief on his account, that I cannot make up my mind whether to write a felicitating or consolatory reply;

a little of both seems best suited to your case.

"Of course, you do not think of any immediate union; that being, under his altered circumstances, inexpedient: I merely understand you to be engaged. Nothing can be plainer, from Sir William being unsuccessful in his interview with the vile shrew—forgive me, Lucy—than that she is irrevocably insane, or totally devoid of natural affection.

"Were Henry to blame in any respect or degree, one might with greater leniency be provoked at her want of charity, want of maternity—ay, and want of Christianity: but, when we know what *he is*, what he always *was* — so thoroughly steady and good—and when we remember the cause of his being disinherited, repudiated, *cursed*—his refusing to unite himself to that lost

and unfortunate French girl—why, Lucy dear, the woman *must* be mad!

"And this brings me to ask, has any thing been heard of the wretched Violette? For the life of me, I cannot make out how Mrs. Lawrence managed so long to pass for a religious, nay, an excellent character. Just look at her family—Hélena, Violette, Henry! But you will object to my taking upon myself the office of censor.

"Forget not to assure your gentle shepherd of my full appreciation of the *compliment* — don't be offended, Lucy — he has paid us. In the wide world I know not another whom I could so heartily have selected for *your* husband and *my* brother; and I only hope that the time may soon arrive when he and you, and I, and all our dear friends, shall be more closely and indissolubly united.

"I had purposed writing to himself on the auspicious step; but Sir Geoffry is so busied with new ordinances and whatnots, that I cannot call a moment my own. Next month it will be my care: meanwhile, I hope you have prevailed on him to give up the idea of a profession such as he suggested.

"I know he has strange—though, perhaps, true and sensible—opinions as to what befits a gentleman and what degrades him; but we are so undeniably the slaves of custom, of the times, that it is a dangerous venture to overleap their trammels, even in the attempt to establish a noble principle, to right a wrongly depreciated vocation.

"Henry was always an independent fellow, and I shall be anxious to learn how his proposition ended. What a noble anti-

pathy to relying on others for support has his spirit throughout displayed!

"And now about myself: Miss Hamlyn was quite correct, although a little cruel, in her different report of my health, as I have certainly somewhat assimilated to a lath since you saw me, and my clothes are an easy fit; but I am so perfectly happy with Florence—I always call her Florence when nobody hears me—and the climate is so delicious, and everything jumps so completely with my humour, that I dare not conscientiously complain, and am sulky with your beautiful correspondent for putting you into fidgets about nothing.

"More in my next: I am required in the office. Love to Sir William and Co., Aunt Ernestine, &c.

"Ever, my own Lucy, your affectionate brother, "W. Sandys."

To this effusion Lucy replied as ensueth, by the following month's mail:—

"September 5, 18—.

"My dearest Wellesly—That which we all dreaded is befallen—our worst fears are ratified: Henry, in spite of everything we could do or say to dissuade him, left us, twelve days ago, for Italy. What has or will become of him we cannot pretend to guess, as he gave us no clue to his destination—had none, I imagine, to give—and has never written a line, *even to me*, since his departure.

"We are equally in ignorance as to the ends which he may have proposed to himself, although our suspicions lead us to conclude that his object in going to Italy had something to say to his musical acquirements and tastes. Almost the only article

of superfluous luggage carried along with him was our old friend, his guitar.

"You may fancy, for I dare not describe, the gloom which his absence has thrown over Bridlestone—an absence so unsatisfactorily accounted for! The silly fellow—I scarcely feel justified in the use of this term, but he deserves it—never hinted to his best friends the step which he had in contemplation, further than by expressing now and again, as I told you in a former note, his unwillingness to 'sponge,' as he called it, on Sir William Price.

"Now, albeit I could barely see the force of this sensitive whim, when applied to our Bridlestone patron, I so far assented as to urge his reading for orders, with a view to obtaining a curacy, and thus acquiring an early independence.

"Henry only laughed at me, shook his

head, spoke of having no call to such a profession, and hinted, though obscurely, yet, as I now perceive, seriously, at the actual bias of his tastes.

"It was my turn to laugh, little suspecting that his mind had been made up from the very first not to follow any pursuit, unless one according with his bent. *You* know, Wellesly, that Henry Lawrence's bent was *music*.

"This is all I can tell, I am sorry to say, of his adventurous withdrawal from amongst us; unless that when, on that most ill-starred evening, we sat waiting the announcement of dinner, Hassan presented himself with a face which foreboded no good, and, trembling at every joint, handed me a tiny, scribbled slip.

"Oh, I saw it all at a glance! He was gone—had started after breakfast—would

be already beyond recall. Thoughtless, impetuous Henry! Here are his very words—

"'10 o'clock, A.M.

"'Dear Lucy, I am off for Italy; will write when I can: only, don't be frightened about me; it's all as it should be. Patience, my sweet girl, patience, and better times will come. My love to Sir William and the ladies: they must not entertain any fears on my account. You will try to find a berth for Hassan until I return to claim him; which, that it may be soon, God grant! Farewell.

"'Yours, with no changing affection,

"'H. L.'

"Now, was it not cruel of him, Wellesly? I'm sure he didn't intend it, but it was. And there poor Hassan stood, doing every

thing to contain himself, to keep down tears, but all in vain.

"I handed the letter to Mrs. Longfellow, and we had a good cry together.

"The faithful Egyptian knew nothing further than that he had packed his master's boxes, conveyed them to the station, received a year's pay in advance, been ordered to carry and fetch for Miss Lucy—poor Miss Lucy!—and, when he ventured to ask where his master was going, had been told to find out, and not for the world to breathe a syllable of the affair until evening. Dear, thoughtless, generous Henry!

"But my paper is nigh exhausted, and I have provoked your endurance by my lovesick narration.

"Let me see; there are some questions to answer: Mrs. Lawrence has been indeed censurable, but—most unfortunate old wo-

man!—her punishment already lays a heavy retributive hand upon her: she is said to be out of her mind, to have grown quite childish and feeble, and to be fast lapsing into that state of imbecility when life is but a living death. She will see nobody, not even her children, for whom, indeed, she appears to have utterly lost all fondness, and sits crying and raving, I am told, in her dismal chamber, a burden to herself, a nonentity to others, a terrible warning.

"I sometimes meet Hélena on the downs, muffled in black, with a crape veil screening her features, and a sad, slow pace, betokening her chilled and desolate heart. Poor thing, how I pity and feel for her! Mrs. Longfellow has walked unaccompanied to Lawrenceville this afternoon, with the hope of seeing her, and intending to bring her over, if possible, to Bridlestone.

"The monster whom it is probable she must, for the term of her natural life, call husband, the odious Greenspur, has already joined, it is reported, his regiment in India. We cannot, nevertheless, find his name in the Army List; and Sir William thinks it not impossible that the whole matter was a low-bred hoax: yet were his marriage, style, and title, entered in the papers as 'Captain Greenspur, —th Regiment, N.I.' None of us thought of questioning his representations until too late: he is well, however, away.

"Nothing transpires as to the fate of the truly wretched Violette de Merton; but our dear Norah, who, in dutiful accordance with Sir William's scheme, is carefully going the round of the German spas, has determined, on her return to Paris, and, indeed, everywhere, to exert all the means in her

power to discover, and, if possible, *re*cover, the neglected wanderer.

"You will excuse my dwelling thus briefly on so distasteful, so sorrowful a subject. Indeed, my dear brother, when I look around me, and consider the misery and ruin into which some of my neighbours have fallen, I cannot help thinking myself, whilst a comparatively favoured, a most thoroughly selfish and repining mortal. I must use my best endeavours to be thankful, hopeful, and cheerful.

"One word more about Henry: I would not have you think me opposed to his musical aspirations—to his adoption of music as an art—on the score of its being a derogatory or ungentlemanlike calling; I cannot agree to that, by any means: it is, on the contrary, a noble, beautiful, inspiring, and purifying talent, with which but few

are pre-eminently gifted, and, like any other in-born talent, it should not be buried in the earth. My sole objection is, that I see no necessity for his absenting himself from—but you are laughing at me. Well, to be sure, I *am* an egotistic being.

"Oh, I almost forgot to tell you that Norah encountered the Montgomerys at Baden-Baden, where Fanny was making fierce love, Norah wrote, to a superannuated half-pay officer—of all people in the world! —and Clara, our romantic friend, seemed quite out of conceit with the pomps and vanities, &c., (all Norah's expression) and solely devoted to meditation and tractarian treatises. Mrs. Montgomery whispered in confidence to this Irish *trustee* that the cause of poor C.'s change was a disappointment in love, some hymeneal failure, which had driven the hapless maid out of the

market into the Rubric: a story, is it not, altogether after Norah's own heart?

"And now, my dear boy, for a word about your health. You really *must* eschew these interminable gaieties: you are wearing yourself out, I can see, by inches, and I won't allow it, indeed I won't, any more. I have no doubt that Florence is the point of attraction; but you are surely unreasonable, if breakfasting, tiffining, riding, driving, and dining, be not sufficient opportunity for basking in her fascinating sunshine. How I envy you her singing! Give her my warmest regards, and accept, yourself, no small fragment of the same.

"Wellesly, dear, you must not *think* of falling in love with Miss Hamlyn—remember *that*—from

"Your own faithful sister,

"L. Sandys."

This parenthetical caution came too late: with all Wellesly's deferential obedience to his sage little monitress, he made up his mind that things had gone too far for the observance in any degree of her counsel; which, moreover, he could not help feeling unreasonable, on the score that "People living in glass houses shouldn't throw stones." In for it irretrievably, if ever man was, was Wellesly at the very date of the receipt of her interdict.

Let us transfer our pages to the scene of Sir Geoffry's government.

CHAPTER VIII.

It is early morn, and still dark; scarcely has the fort gun roared five o'clock, the bugle responded amen, and her Majesty's mail-coach, rattling and jingling through the narrow streets, roused every Pariah dog into full chorus, when Florence Hamlyn, noiselessly hurrying down stairs, appears by the light of a dimly flickering lamp, equipped in riding-habit and hat, and advances into the chunam-polished hall. Already her cavalier has the coffee stirrup-cup filled, and duly presents it with more than matutinal grace.

A few minutes, and these early birds have

perched themselves on their dainty Arab thorough-breds, and are winding their way through the odorous trees, preceded by a couple of outrunners with chaunris.

Morn in the tropics is positively delicious; every blade of grass has its drop of dew, every leafy bough its *bouquet* of perfume; Nature, awaking out of a cool, refreshing slumber, wears her happiest smile, and exhibits her blandest humour. There is a touch of rejuvenescence on atmosphere and earth; the world's lease seems renewable for ever. There is a purity, an inspiriting rarity, in the breath of dawn, which feeds the soul, and divulges some faint idea of what Eden must have been in the days that shall arrive no more. Yet how brief is its duration; darkness is magically driven off by day, and the sun has scarcely peeped into our faces, when we in turn are

compelled to retreat before his torrid rays.

For that fleeting morning hour Florence and Wellesly have cantered forth; we overtake them riding by the shore.

A heavy surf flings whole tons of sheeted foam against the beach: loud as the thunder, ever returning, and sparkling with rainbow hues, that mighty magnificence has a wondrous charm and a world-old history to tell!

But they have sped on, that little-musing and well-assorted brace, and are running the gauntlet through files of yelling children, yelping curs, apathetic adults, free-and-easy pigs, all the animalia of an awakened hamlet.

On they go, nor ever draw rein until, with a multitude of other chattering equestrians, their trusty steeds halt beneath the

columnar roots of a wide-spreading banyan, the *rendezvous* to which young ladies, on the pretext of quaffing that rather unpalatable champagne of native growth, unpoetically termed "toddy," resort for the benefit of their health—"toddy," like all medicinal abominations, being considered wholesome—and now and then, when they have a showy plume in their hats, for its exhibition. But very sensible people, and particularly mothers, consider this vegetable spring a most valuable institution, an occasional *question* having been popped under that picturesque and Colossus-of-Rhodes-like tree.

Room was quickly made for the Governor's daughter, and all manner of politeness observed.

Now, whether from a hankering after the sublime, or toadyism—an *ism* terribly de-

veloped in our Eastern realms—or a still more selfish desire to excite the envy and awe of one's fellow-citizens, it invariably happened that, to every ball, pic-nic, polka party, every respectable entertainment, the Hamlyns were certain of a ticket, and besought to go; in which case, should it appear to Madeline that, without descending from that lofty peg upon which, in her position as Governor's wife, she hung, she might manage a desirable flirtation with Captain This, or Mr. That, might show off her airs and graces to advantage, and escape "old Hum-drum" (as she endearingly denominated Sir Geoffry) for the time being—Sir Geoffry rarely cared to accompany her—the invitation was graciously accepted, and the overjoyed host plunged into every extravagance of ruinous expenditure, for the honour of an hour or

two's condescension on the part of the magnates of Government House.

And this brings us to our banyan group.

A very thin lady, after whispering mysteriously with her husband, turned her horse's head, and wheeled round to Miss Hamlyn's side. With a most winning cough and smile, she fixed her sentimental green eyes on that somewhat regardless toddy drinker, who was receiving the humble homage of a dusky Ganymede, and requiting him with a silver coin; when, finding she coughed and smiled in vain, and that the object of her physical efforts was preparing to retreat, she had actually the effrontery to use her whip, in a rousing manner, on the nether quarters of the Governmental nag. This measure induced the fiery animal to kick out, and Florence, who was carelessly leaning towards Wel-

lesly, and laughing in the most unsuspecting manner, was unseated thereby—indeed, would certainly have found her level, if Wellesly's arm had not steadied and caught her.

The horse-keepers ran with their *chaunris*, and commenced flapping the brute's haunches, when our skinny acquaintance—whose name for obvious reasons we conceal—coughing up a shriek, broke out—

"It wasn't flies—it was me!"

Florence looked round, and what with the audacious Skeleton's indifferent grammar, Jim Crow cawbeen, and shrill articulation, could not, well bred as she was, restrain a mellow laugh.

"Why, Mrs. ——, what spite have you against my pretty Sultan?"

"Oh, none in the least, Miss Flo'; but I hope you'll forgive me, if I ask for a word

or two aside, as I have a particular request to make, Miss Florence: now, will you, though?"

"Certainly;" and they retired a short way from the cavalcade.

"My Dan," resumed the Skeleton, in a mysterious tone, "has persuaded me to give a ball."

Vice-versâ of persons would have been more true—Dan was no dancer.

"Lady Hamlyn and yourself were of course at the head of our list, and I got your mamma's reply last night—but she refuses for you, and is coming alone; now, excuse me, Miss Flo', you went to Mrs. ——'s polka party last week, and they will all talk about your declining *me*. Could you reconsider—might I hope? Now, dear, sweet, pretty Miss Flo'!" Up went the green eyes again.

"It must be some mistake, Mrs. ——," returned the girl, concealing a frown; "I can assure you I have not seen your polite invitation, and am most happy to accept it: what day?"

"Oh, thank you! this day fortnight."

"Very well: come, Mr. Sandys," she added, returning to the Secretary's side: "good morning, Mrs. ——!"

And away they galloped, leaving the Skeleton in a whirl of ecstasy, and now the centre of all honour.

Let us follow our heroine home—

> "It is not much of a distance to go,
> Only a couple of *cos* or so—"

and into her dressing-room. She has despatched her maid on a message to Madeline's bedside, and shortly receives for answer, that no invitation of any kind was enclosed, either by mistake or intentionally,

to the mother for the daughter, either yesterday or on any preceding occasion, and requesting to be informed, in return, why Miss Hamlyn took such an idea into her head.

To this retaliation the younger lady vouchsafed nor notice nor reply.

"'I know you too well, mamma, to believe you!" muttered Florence, with a contemptuous curl of her pretty lip, as, on receipt of the maternal assurance, she slowly proceeded to dress.

And Florence was correct in her estimate: with every disposition to be charitable, we cannot help Madeline out of the scrape. The invitation had come precisely as the Skeleton deposed, had been delivered to my lady, and by the same dignitary was withheld.

We have early alluded to the existence

of a certain cankering, but hitherto checked, disease, which, ever since the superior charms of our heroine had burst on her step-mother's unwelcoming gaze, was working much mischief and discomfort in that scantily furnished apartment, which we will suppose to have been occupied by Madeline's heart. That envy, hatred, malice, and other unchristian feelings were rousing a tempest in her cardiac region, it is most certain; and, although temporary squalls, distant thunder, and such like prognostications, had hitherto come and then cleared away, the elements were but gathering strength, and would one day or other concentrate to fling their bolts of discord with deadly aim against that household whose evil *genie* she, Madeline, was.

How often and how heartily did she wish the younger beauty back again at school in

Normandy, or on the icebergs of Behring's Straits—anywhere out of sight!

She awoke, one morning, in a divine humour—by no means her wont—after having dreamed that Florence was seamed and pitted by the smallpox. Morning dreams, she had heard, come true; oh, that it might realise itself, that beatific vision!

CHAPTER IX.

It is now night: away in the lonely fields—

> "A night of stars and stillness; not a breath
> Disturbs the slumbering ether, while a wreath
> Of twinkling brilliants circles round the moon,
> And dazzles on her robes of dark maroon."

But here, in the civilized quarter, they are kicking up—

> "A deal of din, a most tremendous clash, a
> Big hubbub—what niggers call *tamàsha*."

Rows of lamps sparkle on either side of the Skeleton's avenue; carriages are beginning to set down, the band is tuning in the veranda, and the Skeleton herself, gracefully leaning upon Dan, smirks courteously to every *entrée*, but reserves her fire for the

anticipated grandees from Government House.

Florence had despatched a mounted Orderly with a note, accepting, ceremoniously and true to her promise, the Skeleton's *invitation obligeante*, and, in an excess of joyful triumph, that pack of sparingly covered, though highly ornamented bones, had carelessly neglected to remove the scented *billet* from its place on a round table, where it lay open and public, at once to the envy and for the peeps of every passing guest. Of course, the Skeleton did not *intend* it to be there—not she!

At length, after the company had become restive, and their hostess was about to give way, a blaze of *mashals* announced the vice-regal *cortège*, and the Skeleton, wishing to distinguish herself, flew into the veranda.

Lady Hamlyn stepped from her palanquin, followed by Florence, and attended by Pilkington and Sandys.

"Desire them," whispered Madeline to her brother, and waving her hand towards the orchestra, "desire them to play 'God Save the Queen.'"

Just in the nick of time, at the most effective moment, the Governor's lady, leaning on the Governor's A. D. C., sailed haughtily into the ball-room, glowing with beauty, and unable to restrain a smile of satisfied success. Madeline felt remarkably queen-like, and bowed with most ludicrous condescension. As for Florence, with her arm in the angular receptacle volunteered by her Skeleton friend, she followed as naturally as possible, and had something pleasant to say to all.

A great many polkas having been danced,

and a wearisome display of nautch girls and jugglers introduced, there rose the joyful murmur, supper!

Now, with no wish to put any but the best possible construction on Madeline's conduct, we dare not neglect to notice that, under the fraternizing influence of champagne, she descended in great measure from that too pre-eminent demeanour which, with so much care, she had previously studied before her dressing-room glass.

Time went on, and Captain Blank—no one can possibly appropriate *this* surname—who was at all times very much at her service, and to whose society she was wont to devote her leisure hours, who had many private interviews to present *bouquets*, many spare moments to pay compliments, and who, by a preconcerted understanding, was instantly and at all times admitted to my

lady's *boudoir* when my lady was alone—this gallant officer, with remarkable *finesse*, managed to escape, with his splendid charge, into the veranda of that crowded and noisy banquet-room, and thence down the steps, unobserved, into the *tope* of trees, whose dark and stooping branches, through which the moonlight was striving in vain to pierce, offered an effectual screen from the sharp-sighted dames who speedily missed them, and as speedily spread their mysterious absence.

Now, for our part, we will express no opinion as to the motives for this romantic retirement. If Lady Hamlyn, however, *did* patronize Sillery or Sauterne, we are aware, from sad personal experience, that the very worst remedy is a mouthful of fresh air; and, on the other hand, if a mere ebullition of sentiment dictated the retreat,

why should she have eschewed that so sentimental luminary the moon? why did she not stroll into the avenue where those tender rays flickered on the stones, and flirted with the shadows of the stately peepuls?

But further than this we do not wish to go: not that others went no further; yes, and a great deal further. There were those who pretended to know Madeline well; who, by some back-stairs influence, had a pretty minute acquaintance with the habits and foibles of the residents at Queen's House, and fancied themselves capable of discerning rents in, even in, Lady Hamlyn's reputation; and these busybodies, who would have had quite enough to do to look at home, went about shaking their heads, muttering, frowning, turning up their eyes, shivering—though the thermometer was at

90°—assembling "their girls," and founding a mighty fabric of scandal on implication.

Meanwhile, Florence and Wellesly were resuming the pleasures of a polka, and a host of red, blue, green, and black coats, hurried from the grosser allurements of supper, to watch the graceful evolutions of the handsomest couple and best dancers in the colony.

"That's an *il faut*, I say, Bunty!"

"What d'ye mean?" asked Bunty, rather muddled by sangaree.

"Why, Beauty Hamlyn and the Secretary; we shall have a tiptop wedding."

"Blank prefers the mother; a touch more voluptuous, eh?" from a rifleman tipsily weak upon the pins.

"More get-atable, perhaps!" in reply.

"Where is she, old boy?" resumed the first, who was at the pokingly affectionate stage.

"Who? Mother Hamlyn?"

"Ah!" affirmative.

"Why, Blank has hold of her somewhere, to be sure; he was plying her at the bottle very carefully awhile ago, and I dare say you'll find them in the corners, or under the table."

At which piece of delicate wit, the whole group, militant and vinous, began to roar.

Now it happened that Florence and partner were resting from their labours (for dancing *is* a labour in C——) a little in advance of these sons of Bacchus and Mars, but sufficiently near to catch every word of their discourse. Their eyes met, and the damsel took his arm.

Leaving the performers, they glided from the room, and silently sought the veranda. Just on its steps, where the lamps were

expiring, and morning began to shed a sickly hue, they were met by Pilkington, who informed them that his sister had driven home in advance, not having been able, as she assured him, poor credulous goose! to find them in the crowd, and that he had procured another equipage, which was at their call.

Without a word, Miss Hamlyn entered the palanquin, her cavalier followed, and so appeared to end for them the Skeleton's display.

Not so, however. Next day, at noon, or thereabouts, whilst a dapper maid dressed Florence's long, yellow, Eve-like hair, at that crisis of menial garrulity, the attention of her still drowsy mistress was attracted by the abruptness of her interjection—

"Lord bless me, ma'am, but milady

came home last night a woful show. Flowers gone, gloves torn, scent-bottle lost, ringlets fuzzy—all, as I'm a livin' sinner!"

There was but a slight taint of that feminine disease, curiosity, in our heroine's composition—rarely did she permit the retail of scandal; yet, in the present case, when she had suspected, in spite of herself, so much and so long; when, for her father's sake, she was anxious to know the worst, and to put the old man on his guard—is Florence, our high-souled, honourable Florence, blameworthy, for having encouraged the further revelations of her maid? we trow not! Let us attempt a *précis*.

The abigail went on to say, that Captain Blank and milady were seen in no decorous attitudes, by certain of milady's own native flunkies, who, squatting under the

roots of some neighbouring cocoa-nut trees, in wait for the ball's termination, were unintentional witnesses of the very most questionable behaviour. That finally Captain Blank emerged from the plantation, called hastily for Lady Hamlyn's palanquin, into which, when drawn up, the frail Madeline hurried, and that, after Pilkington, who chanced to appear, had been dismissed with a brief command, the *syces* were ordered to drive rapidly home.

This is the substance of what, with a vast amount of colour and a notable disregard for propriety, the maid revealed. She concluded by saying—

"Master Pilkington knows her goins-on as well as the rest of us, but it's as much as his place is worth not to peach, so it is. The very cooks and *mateys* joke about her. I've seen the horse-keepers stick their

tongues in their cheeks afore her face—I could tell more nor that."

"Hush, Janet! that will do; not a syllable must be spoken on the subject again: leave me for the present—I shall finish my dressing alone."

"You're not angry with me, Miss Florence, I hope? You surely don't think your old nurse's child would willingly say anything to hurt you? Dear, dear, it's to warn you, I spoke, and to guard both yourself and the master! Oh, ma'am, if the house was once rid of her!"

And the honest girl hid her face in her hands, sobbing convulsively.

"Janet, Janet, how could you suppose I was angry? I am grieved, stung, affrighted. Oh, God! on what a mine we slumber! *He* slumbers, my father—my poor, poor, helpless father! Stay,

Janet—what—what can we do to save him—your master?"

"That's what I've been asking myself, Miss Florence, many's the time; we must just tell him, I'm afeard—there's nothing else for it."

"And to rescue *her*, Janet?" continued the generous damsel, as, too overcome with sudden agony, she propped her quivering form against a chair.

"Sure, nothing!" returned Janet, solemnly. "It's all one what happens her now, for she's black at the heart, miss; and don't sully your sweet young lips with her shameless, degraded name!"

Enough. Janet was sent for Pilkington; Florence, hastily donning her robe, withdrew into her *boudoir*, and awaited him.

He came: she was quite composed, quite herself again; and, the servant having been

dismissed, they considered what steps should be taken, or if any.

Finally, it was agreed that, when Madeline rode out with Blank, as usual, in the evening, they should wait together on Sir Geoffry, and, whilst studiously avoiding an accusation, without revealing a tithe of what they knew or feared, that an attempt should then be made to arouse the veteran's suspicions, or at any rate to wake him from his torpor.

It was a work of extreme difficulty, requiring consummate coolness and care. While they held the light to the Governor's eyes, one spark, one scintillation, would suffice to create an explosion. This was, of all things, to be avoided; it could have done no good, it might have ended in much evil: *Sir Geoffry was merely to be quickened.*

Florence prepared her case, and, with

Pilkington as junior counsel, she succeeded. The subject was casually introduced, temperately conducted, and finally dismissed, by Sir Geoffry remarking as follows:—

"Madeline is a silly girl, to gad about as she does with a parcel of officers. It was always her way; but these colonial folks chatter so, we must try to beckon her off. Never mind, children; I'll speak to her about it myself."

CHAPTER X.

Yet further events were to follow, and other individuals were to date their eras from the Skeleton's ball.

Although dinner-hour at Government House was, reasonably, that of eight, so that the veriest loiterer might have time to dress after his or her evening ride, it was ordained that the close of the subsequent day, and arrival of that appetizing hour, when the fort gun bellowed its vespers, the tattoo beat, and the kettle-drums rattled, should bring no Lady Hamlyn to claim the Governor's arm, and dinner was consequently delayed.

Sir Geoffry, like all frank and manly characters, had a devil of a temper when it was roused; it subsided, to be sure, almost immediately, but, while in force, 'twere wisest to keep out of his way.

There prevailed, on this momentous night, two weighty reasons, which, within the passage of five minutes after gun-fire, lashed him into fury: the one, a probability of his dinner being spoiled; the other, a comparison of his wife's absence, and his recent conversation on her conduct with Florence and the A. D. C.

Men who have moved in high circles all through life, who are settling into cozy and rotund antiques, men with double chins, good complexions, and ample waistcoats, are generally *bon-vivants:* Sir Geoffry was no exception to the rule.

"This is out-and-out too bad; romping

after nightfall, and the fish overdone; at once careless and improper—I won't tolerate such conduct any longer!"

"Mamma will soon return, I dare say," ventured Florence, with the hope of soothing her sire: at which moment the Secretary entered from his dressing-room, scrupulously got up, as usual, and with his customary sparkling humour lighting a smooth and youthful face.

"Lady Hamlyn is late, Sir Geoffry; it has gone eight."

"Thank you, sir, for news!" replied the old man, testily.

Wellesly saw there was something wrong; it was the first rebuff from his superior.

Looking towards Florence—his good angel, whom Lucy had counselled to be a sister to him, and who was something

more—he found an explanation in her serious eyes: the General was angry with Madeline, he himself had unwittingly ripped open the sore.

There is a freemasonry between lovers, and Wellesly understood by those telegraphic eyes, that no subject, just then, could have been more *mal-à-propos*.

At this instant, the Lady Governess brushed past the Aide-de-Camp into the room, looking more bold and splendid than ever. Holding up her riding-habit, and wearing a jaunty hat and feathers, her features flushed, and ringlets negligently floating, she certainly was a magnificent specimen.

Learning from the not peculiarly benignant countenance of her older and better half that some kind of explanation was requisite, she exclaimed—

"A thousand pardons, good people, but a terrible misfortune must plead my excuses: two miles beyond the great banyan, my Arab cast a shoe, went dead lame, and only guess how long we have been creeping home?"

No attempt at answer from her still inimical, hungry spouse.

"Two hours, Sir Geoffry!—did you ever hear anything so provoking? I'm sure it was sheer carelessness in the farrier, and I wish, Pilkington, you would employ some other."

"And *I* wish, Lady Hamlyn," broke out Sir Geoffry, "you would dress for dinner; unless, indeed, you have already dined *elsewhere*—at mess, perhaps, hem! Sandys, ring that bell."

This was unprecedented on the part of him whom Madeline had hitherto believed

herself capable of "twisting"—to use a household and forcible metaphor—"round her thumb!"

Its effect was electric; the young wife winced under the veteran's bitter sarcasm; her fears saw detection endorsed on a stratagem which she had hoped successfully to employ.

"What if he should send to examine my horse's foot!" thought Madeline, more dead than living with affright. At any rate, *he had found her out;* how far, she did not care to imagine; but her stockade was carried—how she trembled!

Without further attempt at parley, with her eyes downcast, her cheeks burning, her steps failing, she passed from before the frown and censure of that honest, simple-minded man.

Dinner was served, Lady Hamlyn sent

an apology—didn't feel well, and would dine in her own room.

It was quite true; she did *not* feel well—she felt as though she could *hang* herself; for, "perhaps," ruminated Madeline, "perhaps he knows it all!"

That was by no means a sociable entertainment: the soup, greasy; fish, cold and broken; *entrées* and *entremets*, tasteless; the very wines over-iced—and then—Madeline!

Perfect silence, with the exception of an occasional whisper, produced, together with the monotonous action of the punkah, a somniferous effect on Sir Geoffry: he was, I grieve to say, snoring, when his daughter and officials rose from table. They left him scowling and sleeping heavily, and Florence did not sing that night.

Meantime, Madeline had made up her

mind: she was reclining on a low couch when the young people re-entered the drawing-rooms. Rich lace lappets relieved the very unusual pallor of her face; Florence gently asked after her health.

"Where is Sir Geoffry?" could not be construed into a reply.

"Asleep," answered his daughter, "in the dining-hall."

Madeline rose, and left the room. Hurriedly descending the grand staircase, closing every door in her progress, stopping to dismiss the *punkawallah*, and ascertaining that the stone walls harboured no ears, she glided noiselessly into the banquet-room, where, before a *buffet* of sparkling wines, brilliant candelabra, and gaudy fruits and flowers, sat, slumbering uneasily, and with drooping head, the General.

It was a strange, pantomimic scene; the

wife stealthily approaching his chair, scrutinizing carefully his features, adapting herself to their fancied indication.

"No; he may *suspect*, but he does not know *all*," thought Lady Hamlyn: "he would not be asleep, even thus grimly, if he did: so far well: and now for my counter-plot. Yet, stay—he makes no use of his *own* eyes, and who could have lent him *theirs?* That about my 'dining elsewhere—at mess, perhaps'—*that* was not his own idea; no, I have to thank Miss Florence and her friend for it, I feel sure.

"Well, well, one good turn deserves another; my influence with old Hum-drum is yet greater than they deem; but I'll prove it—prove it, ere the night has passed—*and they shall suffer!* The counter-plot, the counter-plot!"

She laid her jewelled hand on the old

man's shoulder—a word or two awoke him —he raised his head, until he saw his wife, when it fell again quite heavily.

"You are angry with me, I perceive, Sir Geoffry?" began Madeline, calm, and inquiringly, like an injured woman.

"I *am*, and have just cause!" was his dogged reply.

"Now, wherefore, General? Is it merely that, for the first time in my life, I was somewhat late this evening? Now, you are unreasonable, unkind!"

"It is *you* who are unkind, Madeline; the dinner be d—d!—it's not that—but have you no care for your own fame?—is it right of you to treat us all as you do? —have you no shame—no sense, I wonder?"

Oh, had you but seen her cameleon-like colour, how it came and went, from crimson

to deadly white! Oh, had you but traced the guilty lines which fear and shame drew across her brow!

"Then am I lost!" she muttered; "then has he discovered all!"

The General's head was still bowed; he struggled hard to regain his temper; it had been sorely tried that evening—it was to be tried more sorely still! He resumed, gravely:

"Lady Hamlyn; in order to prevent the possibility of any further spread of scandal, it is my desire that, in time future, you confine your choice of gentleman company to the members of your own household: you must renounce Captain Blank, however reluctantly, and put up, as best you may, with your brother or Mr. Sandys: I do not intend to be harsh with you, Madeline, and I shall give you my reasons for this order—it *is* an order, remember!

"First, you are aware of the tendency to detraction inherent in all colonial society, and that, the higher the game, the more is the long-bow stretched. I need not remind you of certain disagreeable occurrences under my last administration; I never believed what they said, but you know what they *did* say.

"Secondly, you are very young, and very handsome: and thirdly, *I am old;* with which reasons be content to believe me incapable of any severity which *your* conduct or *my* character does not imperatively require. Idle people, I am told, have already begun to talk, and I leave it to your own good sense, if this evening's events will not give a handle to such mischief-mongers."

"What events, Sir Geoffry?" quickly interposed Madeline, with a world of agony removed from her fearful heart.

"Why, staying out with some such mad-cap as Blank, till eight o'clock—that's all!"

"And could I help myself, General?—are you not fully aware of the unforeseen cause?—ah, but you do not believe me!"

And she was unable to keep down her rising colour—*guilt rouged her.*

"I *do* believe you, Madeline; but will *others?*"

For a moment, there was silence—her triumph was coming: she dilated considerably.

At length, the Governor raised his eyes, rested them affectionately on the degraded being whose only fault, in his opinion, was thoughtlessness—and his rebuke was over. Taking her hand, he patted it between his own, admired its rings, and was himself again.

But she, who had stood throughout the

lecture, now quivering with terror, and now, by the explanation, relieved, she seated herself, much with the air of a martyred innocent, and affectedly began—

"Sir Geoffry, I have listened patiently to *your* charge, nor feel surprised that they should attempt to poison your ear against me: but I am grieved, deeply grieved, to think that any unintentional act of mine should have encouraged you to believe my traducers. Permit me, now, as your wife, from whom no unfounded slanders ought to find concealment, to inquire whether Mr. Sandys took any pains to establish the foregoing fabrications in your mind?"

"Neither by word nor look, Madeline; Mr. Sandys, so far as I can tell, knows nothing whatever about them."

This rather staggered the defendant, but she resumed—"Then did Florence?"

And her large, dark, animal eyes, fastened inquisitorially on her husband.

"Yes; Florence, like myself, is so interested in your....."

"Ha!—enough. Now listen, General Hamlyn, listen, and you may hear something that will make your heart throb wildly—something about this very Florence—this beauty, whom you pamper and pet, while all the time she laughs at you in her sleeve!

"Your daughter, Florence, has engaged herself to marry a beggar—has sacrificed her fortune, talents, family, to a poor, pitiful underling, who fattens on your bounty; Florence, while you are cruel enough to believe what she says, and says falsely, against *me*, is disgracefully and disgustingly intriguing with that vile sycophant, Wellesly Sandys! Ay, shut your eyes now, old man,

and think better of your poor, calumniated wife, in future!"

And, bursting into a splendidly effective shower of tears, she stalked majestically, colours flying, and victorious, from the battle-field.

CHAPTER XI.

Sir Geoffry, stunned and bruised as he was, had too much paternity in his composition to "let the grass grow under his feet" on the subject. Clapping his hands smartly, and receiving no instant answer, he hurried to the entrance-hall, and in a voice of thunder shouted, "*Bhoy!*"

A moment brought some dozen servants to his call.

"Desire Miss Hamlyn to speak with me in the parlour—quick, sir!"

Like winged thought, the bronzed Mercury flew: Florence came tripping to the door, tapped gently, and entered.

"Oh, Florence! is it true, is it true? Oh, my beautiful angel, my own sweet girl, is it true? And you have really deceived your father? You have really promised yourself to Sandys, to a.....

"But where is he?" cried the veteran, raising his voice to a fearful pitch, from its tone of tristful softness—"where shall I find him—fiend, villain, that he has been! Let me go, girl—let me tell him of the home he has laboured to rob, of the heart he has laboured to break! Let me bid him begone, like a pestilence, from my sight—from amongst us evermore! The wretch! the coward! the....."

"Father, father! are you ill—are you mad?" shrieked the lovely maiden, as, with affrighted looks, she followed him to the door.

"Not mad, my child, but near it! Oh,

this woe, this bitter woe! — *my* Florence and that hireling! Where shall I find him?"

"Father—Sir Geoffry!" cried Florence, as the cause of his violence flashed across her thoughts—"yet a moment hear me—one moment's delay—here! here!"

And she dragged him back to his chair, and closed the door. Sobbing at every word, pale as a corpse, faltering, quivering as an aspen, she kneeled before her angry sire, laid her folded hands upon his knees, looked up, ashy white, like a spirit of the dead—like his first, his fondest wife, *her* mother—and struggling, wrestling with his love, articulated gently—

"*I* have sinned—forgive me! *he* is guiltless, believe me! — me, whom you never doubted, never had reason to doubt or disbelieve, till now!"

Oh, magic of words that could calm, of looks that could restrain him! He was changed—changed, like the drift of a dream—he could hear her now. Rivetted by that earnest, stricken, prostrate, helpless form, he could hear her now.

She spoke again; but so low, so weak was her voice, that it seemed like some wail of an autumn wind, that might suggest, not embody, speech. Yet he feared to interrupt the solemn spell, and waited gravely. At last utterance came.

"Father, dear, as you love me still, exonerate Mr. Sandys! Had *I* opposed him—told him it could never be, would never meet with *your* consent—oh, he was far too noble to think about it more! It was *I*, *I* alone, gave encouragement to his passion! It was *I* who, when he talked of telling *you*, prevented and forbade him! Oh,

dear papa, you cannot, *must* not, blame *him!*"

Overcome for a moment by her grief, she hid her face in those extended hands with which, almost unconsciously, the father pressed and soothed her wetted cheeks, then resumed more calmly—

"Make me one promise, father, and we will dissolve—but no, this cannot be, for I have pledged my faith. Oh, God forgive and pity! I am a wretched, censurable creature! Yet Wellesly — Mr. Sandys — deserves no harshness; he is upright and honourable: send for him, papa; or, stay—I shall bring him to you myself: *he* has power to cut the tie, and *your* word will be *his* law. Only promise, then, promise to love him as before—promise to keep him with you, nay, to take him into further favour. Oh, he is so—so....."

And, sobbing and stretching out her arms, she caught the welcome promise from Sir Geoffry's lips, and hied away to introduce her squire.

"I *have* promised, indeed," muttered the veteran, in stern soliloquy; "and I shall keep to it, too: but," he added, emphatically, "*its price sends Florence home!*"

Home means Europe, in India.

We will not return to the charge with this brace of discomfited fledgelings: suffice it that, however Juliet may have been scared into filial, at the expense of plighted, obedience, by the excited demeanour of her sire, Romeo, when he came to understand for whom her beckonings outside the drawing-room doors were meant, and when a talismanic summary—brief, but pithy, such as youngsters in their interesting relationship can readily prepare — explained the

course things had unexpectedly taken, the part he was called upon to play, &c., managed with dexterous brevity to convince his still fluttering birdy that it would be terrible folly on either his or her part to make any rash promises against the chances of a future renewal of their present unfortunate engagement; that, in fact, while they might with propriety go so far as to disavow any immediate intention of bringing matters to an hymeneal crisis, they ought not to, and would not, enter into any contract with Sir Geoffry for the time to come, or pledge themselves never to love each other more.

This arrangement they perfectly understood, during a rapid but thrilling passage from the second to the ground-floor: there was a sound of kissing, moreover, had any one been eavesdropping; and,

as nothing more than a dissolution of their existing tender bond was likely to be pressed, they bore up quite wonderfully well.

Now for the result of that interview and evening: the lovers were, as they had hoped, required to take no ultimate vow, by the appeased and at all times too placable Governor; but Florence was, within three weeks of the *exposé*, borne on the pitiless waves from those sunny shores to which her heart still clung—most uncommonly to the sorrow of her knight, though much to the joy of the plotting and envious Madeline.

"When shall we, when, once more united be,
Isle of delight, gem of the Eastern sea?
Shall we be changed by time, or worn by care?
Will our old friends their smiles, as wonted, wear?
Years must meanwhile roll by—will they be there?
Beautiful *Lanka D'wipa!* warm and bright,
Come in my dreams, and soothe me in the night!

Scene of my dearest moments, *of my love*—
England or elsewhere treasured far above—
If in the search for happiness I rove,
Oh, call me back to thee; and soon, oh, soon,
Ere life has dwindled from its sunny noon!
For I am exiled, severed now, and sad—
The thought of losing thee and *him*—'tis mad!
Who has such ties to break as I have had?
And they *are* broken, cruelly—ah, yes!
And now my soul sinks into wretchedness!"

'Twas thus that the hapless maiden scribbled her woes, in the solitude of her cabin, on the very day of her departure from C——. Such of my readers as set up to be critics, and can arrive at correct views on all points without the trouble of reflection, will no doubt throw down my tale at this stage — if, indeed, they have endured its impossibilities so far—and cry out—

"A pretty heroine, forsooth! a girl who can cheat her father, gallop about with an amorous youngster, and cut other capers

too numerous to mention—a fine specimen of the cardinal virtues, truly!"

Stay, clever censor, this your sharp reproof, until you hear me.

First and foremost, I never intended to represent Miss Hamlyn as even a creditable approach to perfection: she is faulty as her fellows, and by no means so desirable a model as, for example—*yourself*. No, indeed: too early did she lose that gentle supervision which might have tamed and tutored talents great and showy such as hers—talents both of face and soul, and of a calibre requiring skilful hand and careful eye.

Too early was she sent drifting about this glorious world, in her barque of gold and purple, courting the breezes of pleasure and glittering in the sunshine of youth's halcyon sea, acquiring a dangerous thirst

for freedom, excitement, and adventure, like a man.

No; the wonder is that, with all her varied and powerful gifts, her unfettered and daring essay of life in a walk but seldom innoculously trod, she returned to the smooth and peaceful scenes of home, unscathed and unsullied by her wild exploits; still owning, too, the love of her testy-dispositioned sire, of her thoughtful and observant Lucy, of her confiding, because familiar, Wellesly; and yet further, let us now hope, gentle Reader, of *you*.

Fortunately for Florence, self-respect travelled with her throughout, saving her from the dangers with which her path was, we may suppose, but too thickly strewn, and bringing her finally to atone for the somewhat *vivandière*-like propensities of girlhood, by a wholesome practice of all the

household virtues for which herself and her darling Sandys are deservedly held in high esteem.

To return: the enamoured scribe having made his peace with the General by that clever stroke of policy above mentioned, still revelled, much to the mortification of my lady, in the court favour of my lady's spouse.

Who chaperoned Florence to Europe? Pilkington.

There is yet one point which we desire to discuss—one which you probably would like to see cleared up—Sir Geoffry's objection to the match. It was simply this: that he did not consider his Secretary good enough for his daughter. A youth with no professional prospects, not a penny of his own, nothing but his present precarious standing, seemed naturally but an indiffe-

rent mate for one, who, with every advantage that her high position as *his* daughter, high expectations as *his* sole heir, could confer, might look for a better bidder in the matrimonial market—a title, perhaps; at any rate, something more suitable than Sandys.

Sir Geoffry took a fatherly view of the question; and, while he forbid the banns, did so on the principle of expediency alone. He could see the aspirant in very favourable colours; he had always liked, and, even now, could not but like, him: still Florence —his only and lovely child—she might surely hope for a more flourishing, if not a fonder husband: of course she might; it was ridiculous infatuation in Sandys to imagine he should ever call so much sweetness his own: he wasn't to expect it, and it shouldn't be!

Thus argued Sir Geoffry, in his cooler moments, after his "great go" began to subside, and Wellesly shook hands, on being forgiven. But we must not approach that parlour scene: it was semi-ludicrous, semi-tragic—rather a burlesque, as most tantrums are—so matters came to a temporary lull, as we have told.

CHAPTER XII.

Letters! — letters from Europe! The blue-peter flies—every Briton is on the *qui vive*—parties, visits, races, all are knocked on the head for *that* day—every thought centered in letters from home.

First, a flight of carrier pigeons brings, "by extraordinary despatch," the principal public news to a fortunate editor, whose office is regularly besieged: *précis* are published in hundreds; still the excitement continues.

At length, the welcome blast of a horn announces the approach of her Majesty's mail; servants hie in hordes to the Post

Office, darkening its doors, and impatient for delivery.

The *peons* from Queen's House claiming precedence, in a very few moments Wellesly sits poring over a letter, whose direction is in handwriting carefully disguised, from Florence: a fortunate circumstance put it into our hands:—

"Napoli, Hotel di ——.

"My dearest and only one—A fortnight has passed since I arrived here from Malta, and yet this is the earliest opportunity which offers for fulfilling *my* share of our mutual compact. I have much to tell you.

"And first, Mr. Lawrence, *your chum*, is here. You used to talk so incessantly of his *musical devil*—well, he is now a *professor* of music, the best *maéstro* in Naples,

I believe in Italy, and *primo tenóre* at the *San Carlos!*

"But soft—his identity has been revealed to me alone; here, he is merely spoken of as a distinguished *foreigner*, who, for some reason or other, (thought to be political!) has fled the shores of *Inghilterra*, and been compelled to cultivate his talents; his *incog.* being *Signor Perlotti.*

"You are crying out to know how I scraped acquaintance with him; it was as follows: being bored to death by the frivolous and not over-desirable, or even *reputable zerbini*, who have the run of my aunt's establishment, and finding but little community of feeling between this card-table Contessa and her niece, I determined to devote myself, solely and vigorously, to attain that perfection in my art for which I always felt there was still room.

As a matter of course, Perlotti was enlisted; my aunt doubtless glad to get rid of me, and I returning the compliment fourfold.

In spite of all his disguises—a curling and dyed moustache, an abundance of ringlets, and an Italian lisp—it was impossible, at a glance, to doubt that the *Signor* was a gentleman of the first water. We soon got into conversation; he discovered the seat of my last sojourn.

"'Pray, did you ever meet a Mr. Sandys there?'

"Imagine my confusion! and so—and so—and so—until our stories were mutually told, and both confessed that each was enthusiastic regarding *a* Sandys! Yes; he revealed his dainty love for Lucy, of which, though you must have known it well, you never breathed a whisper; and I—what did *I* do? Oh, you may guess for that! I

went on with my studies—said I didn't care for you one fig! no, Wellesly dear, impossible!

"What I have now to introduce, you will probably hear with reluctance; but reflect dispassionately, trust implicitly, and fear nothing. My position here, in one of the most notoriously profligate gambling-houses in profligate Naples, is by no means a desirable seminary for your future tea-maker; and, having no other alternative, I must either conform, or fly!—Remember *this*, Wellesly.

"You need not be reminded as to who and what Mr. Lawrence is, his relationship to Lucy and yourself, and, through *you*, to *me;* and, added to this, that our aim and end are committed to acquire, as rapidly as may be, that independence, pecuniary, which will enable us—you and me, my be-

loved!—to sail under one flag, and that the *union*-jack; moreover, that a ready means is open to the attainment of our common wish, in the profession which your friend and future brother has not thought it derogatory to adopt for himself, and to recommend for me.

"If you but sit down and look these suggestions over, I am confident you will bear me out in my resolve, and give me credit for the rest.

"Mr. Lawrence, who is alpha and omega through the length and breadth of musical Italy, has undertaken the duties of *direttore* of the Opera at Lucca, during the ensuing season, and I have seen fit to accept, under his auspices, an engagement as *prima donna cantatrice* there. The salary, which is secured by patronage, is large; Janet will be my stage dresser and general companion,

manage my household concerns, and eject Aunt Pauline's emissaries (should she think it her duty to look after me).

"In this way, with prudence, I may shortly be in a position to—but such a *finale* to our sore trials would sound more appropriate coming from *you;* so I shall leave it for you to fill in.

"Good bye—write to me from morning to night—an *un*selfish edict!—and think of me as, in deed and in truth, your

"FLORENCE.

"PS. Direct to '*Signor Enrico Perlotti, Impressario della Opera, Lucca,*' as I shall have quitted Naples in a few hours. The Contessa has no suspicions, yet every thing is in train, and Hassan will bear us company.

"I have to finish a letter to papa, in which no mention of my intentions is made, but I intend to give him a picture

of his sister-in-law that must almost reconcile him to my Hedjira, when, sooner or later, it reaches his ears.

"Naples is, indeed, a shocking place—I am glad, on all accounts, to leave it.

"I wish you could hear me sing a *cantata*, composed for me by your brother—it is a beautiful *morçeau*, and I made its author hide his eyes after listening—indeed, I cried myself. Slaving away at operas, practising shakes, and inventing *cadenzas*—it is thus the day glides by.

"In 'Ernani' I am to make my *débût*. A strange, stirring life is before me!—but I love, idolize music; look forward to working wonders; and see, in the dim distance, an early retirement and picturesque cottage with *you!* *Addio*,

"F. H."

What a girl!—ignoring, at one jump, the

prejudices of a father, a lover, and society at large; dashing into a labyrinth, from whence unharmed retreat is rare; never casting a thought on the conventional restrictions to which ladies are expected deferentially to bow; never remembering that she had a parent to grieve, a sweetheart to affright—perhaps both to estrange; but utterly shelving every doubt; feeling no concern for herself; and one idea alone predominating—to wit, the excitement of life. We offer no further remark.

By the same mail came a closely-crossed letter from Bridlestone:—

"My own dear Brother—Will Sir Geoffry Hamlyn approve of it?—Did you ascertain this, before allowing the matter to assume so serious and definite a form? I more than suspect an answer in the negative. Then how *could* you be so foolish; indeed,

so wrong? Have I not warned you, over and over again, of the mad designs which you told me you entertained with respect to his daughter? Could it be possible that you overlooked the probabilities of the case, namely, that when her father came to be informed of your audacity—I can use no milder term—he would cast you out as a plotting and underhand fortune-hunter?

"Why, consider the disparity between Miss Hamlyn's position and yours—*she* has every advantage of wealth and interest; and to which of these can *you* aspire? I'm afraid, my poor Wellesly, that the climate has affected your, at all times, too chimerical brain—for this is the most charitable light in which even your sister can see such indefensible presumption. Were I to fill an octavo, I should not have rated you enough. What *will* or *has* come

of it?—I live in ceaseless uncertainty and fear on your account.

"You write of having no wish to inform her father, and that *she* is entirely of your mind—a nice pair, for certain! Take a sister's advice, if already it be not too late —*dissolve the inauspicious contract*—make no more love to Miss Hamlyn: she is young, high-spirited, almost as thoughtless as yourself—I judge from your own report of her —and warmly attached, you say, to her father. Go to her, at once; represent the case in its true and common-sense colours, and see if a mutual and amicable exercise of *reason* will not undermine your rash and —permit me to add—ridiculous bargain.

"Now, think the matter over carefully: do, Wellesly, for her and your own sake — foolish, foolish brother! I may conclude with something more palatable, but, at pre-

sent, there is little heart in me—I am desperately downcast, and all, Master W., by and for *you!*

"Of course, I do *not* allude to the subject in the hearing of any of your friends, although you desired me to read your last insane declamation to Sir William: I had much too high a sense of my own dignity to degrade it by showing up the utter puerility of my nearest, and, I shall add, my dearest, relative. Bad news, if any irretrievable step has been taken, will travel quickly enough, without *my* aid.

"All at Bridlestone are well, excepting the onslaught of Sir William's autumnal gout; but, as he always feels the better of it afterwards, and has excellent spirits throughout, we scarcely consider him an invalid. He is building a lofty wall round the new pine shrubbery, for the express

purpose of rendering it impregnable by vagrants, and thus a city of refuge for the feathered family, where they may build and hatch without molestation.

"Hélena Lawrence, as I must call her—all of us avoid Greenspur—has just left us for Lawrenceville; having been summoned by her mother, who is, I am told, at the point of death. It is conjectured that the approach of the mighty King of Terrors has, in some measure, softened her towards her children—I pray God it may be so indeed!

"As for poor Hélena, with every effort on our part, we have not hitherto been able to pierce the gloom which seems to hold her irreclaimably its prey: she is quite calm, gentle, and affectionate, but downcast, spiritless, silent. I have promised to walk out with her daily.

"Miss Price had such an amusing letter from Norah, lately, full to the margin of fun. You may recollect something about Fanny Montgomery and a half-pay veteran, who might, Norah assures us, be her grandsire: well, they are now Mr. and Mrs., or, if you will, Captain and Mrs. Kenyon! I'm afraid it is but an indifferent alliance for our sparkling friend, as report makes the bridegroom a desperate gambler, a used-up and disreputable character—in polite language, an exile. Fanny, however, possesses considerable talent and great good temper, and may undertake the laudable mission of reforming him, with some chances of success.

"And Clara—the romantic and languishing—only guess what has become of Clara! Norah learned from the now deserted mother, that this woe-begone, hapless vestal,

who had given herself up lately to tractarian meditation, was already returned to England, and duly installed—a Protestant Sister of Mercy!

"Mrs. Montgomery volunteered the explanation of so unprecedented an end, to the effect that her sensitive Clara, crossed in love, or jilted by some mysterious and unidentified person—some ideal Lothario—flung herself, in mute despair—not, like Helle, into the water, but, with more modern devotion, into the Mother Superior's arms:—a tragic fate, and worthy of the maid!

"Norah caught sight, *en passant*, of Aunt Ernestine and Mrs. Montgomery, three or four weeks ago, in Germany: they had no end of strange people in their train, and were bound, by easy stages, for the south, on a visit to some Neapolitan Countess

—an ally, no doubt, of our eccentric aunt.

"And now from gay to grave: Mr. Blake met a young noble, a Frenchman, he thought, at Bonn, who, in the course of conversation, mentioned having seen—*where*, I will leave you to suppose, but it is too horrible to believe—Violette de Merton!

"The evident habits of his informer prevented his soliciting any particulars at the time, further than her address: Anthony wrote off immediately, in English, offering, in the kindest manner, to return for her to Paris, with a view to rescuing and reclaiming her.

"By return of post, an answer was received, also in English, denying any knowledge of Ma'mselle de Merton, and saying that no such lady had ever lived there. Thus the matter rests: the noble may have

been mistaken, or perhaps was imposing on Anthony's simple credulity.

"In conclusion, you will like to know something of Henry, although, perhaps, you have direct intelligence from himself. He writes in renovated spirits, and seems about to make a great figure in his profession—indeed, I see, by the papers, that the musical *critiques* teem with his praises. He wishes me to join him, 'for better, for worse,' at Naples; but, although I do not intend withholding my valuable person from its rightful owner at the proper time—whenever that may be—I am not, after consultation with Sir William and his sisters, prepared to expedite matters at present.

"The *maêstro*—who was certainly a prophet without honour, as regards his abilities, in his own country, and whose fame is

as rapid in its growth as it sounds to be deserved—has undertaken the formation of a new company at Lucca, for the coming season, and proposes leaving Naples in a month.

"You will think it strange, *from Lucy*, but I sometimes tolerate the wish that I were fit to be his colleague in the profession—such a one, for instance, as Miss Hamlyn: of course, I am best as I am.

"Now, my dear, dear, suicidal boy! think well and long over my honestly tendered advice; and, that it may not find you so far committed as to be incapable of applying it for good, is the hope and prayer of

"Your anxious and affectionate,

"L. Sandys.

"PS. Henry has sent for Hassan, 'should I not require him,' so the faithful crea-

ture is already embarked, quite beside himself with anticipatory joy.

"PPS. I envy him!"

CHAPTER XIII.

Another interval—for postal and general accommodation—must be permitted to elapse, and three months to roll away. To the head of the house of Hamlyn their progress has been tedious, their incidents startling and sad. Sir Geoffry is solitary without his beautiful child, and deserted as much as may be by his splendid wife. A new *aide-de-camp*—Captain Graham, of the —th Madras N. I.—fills Pilkington's place.

Pilkington, by the way, being on the verge of that desperate venture, matrimony, has made up his mind never to abandon old England again; and hardly believed,

when he first heard of it, that 'Flowence'—whom he was soft upon in bygone days, but who never reciprocated the tender feeling—could of her own free will devote herself to the stage, in preference to accepting that loving heart of his, which might be had for the asking.

Poor Pilkington shook his head some time incredulously; at last, finding that his lament came too late, and anathematizing his planets that he had been short-sighted enough to part company at Malta, he, in a state of unnatural excitement, transferred his affections—slighted and dishonoured as they were—to a juvenile and larky widow, whose smiles were deeper than her purse, and who, in fine, obligingly hearkened to his suit.

Whether or not second love has a sort of double-distilled intensity, or is to the

first as but a mere dilution, it can be proven, to the satisfaction of all inquisitive readers, that this ex-*militaire* cultivates to the present hour, with equal assiduity, his turnips and his wife; and that the current of his life is wondrous smooth. But Pilkington shines dimly in a novel, and here we must bid him adieu.

Captain Graham, or George Graham—for there are two of this surname in the corps, and I only hope the wrong horse may not appropriate the saddle—is a distant cousin of Sir Geoffry's, and has but lately returned from sick-leave furlough to England.

Bushy and dark, "bearded like a pard," tall, stoutly built, and highly bred, no one looks more the able soldier, no one's uniform fits better, no eye more coolly scans the interest, simple and compound, of a tailor's bill. On this handsome Hercules

devolved the duties of superintending the General's household, frisking in his suite at a review, and doing the amiable to his lady.

Arriving from Madras with a train of attendants that would have rivalled A'Becket's, it were no wonder if he made a very decided first impression on Madeline—whether favourable or the reverse, we shall have occasion to show.

About this time, too, it is matter of history that Captain Blank, with most unaccountable abruptness, discontinued his visits to the *zenana* of Government House; nor did the *begam* thus deserted seem to pine—on the contrary, a daily increase of spirits, and a more frequent appearance on the ride, were noticeable.

Madeline and Graham became henceforth inseparables. Truth to tell, *he* was as

fascinating as *she* splendid: no one, unless the discarded Blank, had a word to mutter against him. His manner easy, graceful, flattering, perfect; his face manly, if not strictly handsome, radiant, if not open or frank; his voice "most musical;" his mind profuse of that current coin—or better, paper negociable in all circles—humorous anecdotes, travelled lore, and fashionable topics, daintily commingled with chips of sugary scandal. Such were the qualifications, the "open sesame" of Captain Graham.

Now, although the larger share of the life of this smooth-tongued Mars had been passed in courts and camps, to be seen of all men, yet was there something mysterious about him—something impenetrable—which inspired even his most intimate compeers with a feeling akin to awe. That he was aware of this, his conduct will best

convince you. Meanwhile, had he still belonged to the gallant —th, when Sir Charles's diapason on gambling and riotous living resounded through every Anglo-Indian ear, he might more than have suspected that the castigation was especially intended for himself.

It will not be too much to say, that he had taken leave to Europe, for the purpose of escaping an uncomfortable accumulation of *duns;* and that the main motive for his soliciting no extension of furlough was a similar embarrassment which had grown up at home.

To be sure, he could borrow with greater ease than most men—the security required by his brother officers, and generally by his friends at the station, being merely the honour of an increased familiarity, a blander smile, a more frequent call. It was only

from the native money-lenders that he had any pressure to apprehend; and an invitation to mess frequently mitigated this evil.

Graham was, in fact, the pet man wherever he set himself to work, fascinating all sorts and conditions of humanity; often in scrapes, indeed, but able to glide from amid their slough with serpent's re-integrated lustre.

We must be brief: when it came to be bruited that this lion of the tribe of Moses was appointed *aide-de-camp* to the Governor of C——, some of his more needy creditors grew desperate and clamorous, and insisted, with every threat of serious consequences in default, that their claims should be adjusted previously to his leaving Tambypore.

Graham, wedged, to all appearance, in an inextricable "fix," assured them of his willingness to refund the uttermost farthing,

would they only take the trouble of calling on such a day, at such an hour. In the interval, getting himself up in his best style—which was absolutely killing to the shyest birds—he commenced a series of P. D. A. visits to a couple of dozen married ladies, great allies of his, at the hour when regimental or office duties absented their grosser halves.

What transpired during those affecting farewells, I am not bound to know; but the result was, that, when the time named for the necessary settlement came round, the honourable Graham re-imbursed, interest and all, his astounded, awe-stricken besiegers.

Of course, there were one or two, who, envious of the Captain's popularity, muttered, in secret, certain slanders against the female friends that had so timeously extended a helping hand; nay, his and their

characters were so far maligned as to suffer imputations of the worst kind.

Thus Graham was accused—privately, of course, for they knew his unerring aim too well to trust their tongues—of having extorted large moneys from women of the highest rank, wives of the most respectable residents, under threat of exposing and proving their suspicious intimacy, through a long series of months, with him; and it was by this means, these scandal-mongers hinted, that the requisite rupees were forthcoming.

Skip all the above, however, and we find him captivating man, woman, and child, in Sir Geoffry's colony. As for the *chef* himself, he swears by him: Graham writes all his letters, official as well as private; and the estimation in which his despatches are held in the proper quarter is reiterated

with highly eulogistic regularity by each successive European mail.

In fact, now that Florence is gone, and has, as the old man dismally suspects, committed herself, there is no one can compete with Graham in filling the aching void—he is a son to the General.

Towards Madeline he comports himself—but away with this courtly sarcasm!—away with an attempt to protract the disgust and loathing which must rain down upon this base, this brutal pair! Not another word to disguise or moderate their crime—*they are paramours—and Graham is Greenspur!*

The old man goes on in his old way, but has nobody now to open his eyes, Wellesly being ill in bed; a dark shadow encircles Queen's House—well, well, all in good time!

Yes; the Secretary writhes in fever, the Secretary's work has fallen into abler, if not readier, hands, and the General's daily visit to his youthful invalided scribe's bedside, shows no suspicion, asks no advice —so Wellesly is as ignorant as Sir Geoffry is duped.

Alas, that we should write it! Florence, our lively, thoughtless, reckless, yet loving Florence, has remotely been the cause of poor Sandys's severe attack. Her rash venture—of which he knows not more than the beginning, and in connexion with which, as a lady-like or decorous vocation, he cannot but conceive a host of horrors—has torn from his throbbing head and burning breast many an hour of genial exercise, many a night of renovating sleep.

How can he reconcile to his jealous heart that wild, exciting, unprotected life,

which, with such sudden rapture, she essayed? He fancies, in his ravings, a thousand scenes that rack, and well nigh derange him.

Now, she comes upon the stage, before crowds of noisy, debauched, and heartless men: she is tricked out in gaudy and courtezan-like trappings: she struts like a woman of the town: the opera commences with a fearful exhibition of her lovely limbs in masculine attire: *that* was bad enough; but again, resuming her sex, she hearkens to an Italian ruffian, who warbles all kinds of licentious folly, and makes all kinds of revolting attitudes, to show his passion—his passion for Wellesly's Florence!—and, finally—oh, God!—she rushes into his arms, leans against his cheek, is handled and kissed by him before a throng of gloating eyes.

No wonder if his emaciated frame took kindly to the fever!—Love jaundiced him, so that he did not see her as she was—wild, in truth, but pure as the snowy mountain-broom which, brushed by each swinging breeze, preserves its sweetness still.

He forgot that his brother and best friend, Henry, was present to guard and direct her: he omitted to think that her genius-stirred soul had no room for a baser, earthlier, thought than—*love of him!* So, the fever clung to him with kindly gripe.

CHAPTER XIV.

Florence and Henry are still at Lucca, where the season is prolonged, and all Italy, nay, connoisseurs from Germany and France, pour in to see and hear them. They form an era in the musical world—perfect impersonations of that all-glorious art—and success is a poor term to mark their progress.

The looks, alone, of Florence, are a wonderment to Cisalpine eyes—her light and burnished hair, clear, Albion-sprung complexion, snowy neck and arms, small, dimpled hands, and airy tread—they have nothing to compare to her among themselves:

and then her voice and acting—it is *not* acting, but impassioned nature! Every laugh, every tear, comes welling from the heart; she is in earnest—is, for the time, the thing she represents. Genius, thy glowing mantle sits gracefully on her comely form: every thought she illustrates thou lightest with celestial fire!

It would be a mistake, withal, to suppose that Florence is completely happy: her father and Wellesly rate her too eternally, and, as *she* fancies, too unjustly, for her error—heinous in *their* sight, at worst but venial in *hers*.

"Oh, could they only feel as I do, even for an hour, they would despise my art no longer: could they but witness my habits of life, their uneasiness must vanish into thin air."

It is thus that she soliloquizes over their

grave and jealous reasoning, and then flies to Henry for counsel. Should she retire from the stage?—does he see any impropriety in her avocations? He must tell her unreservedly.

The *maestro* leaving the decision to herself, she hesitates to resign her fascinating life; and the result has hitherto been that her "darling Wellesly's chum" and brother writes no end of lengthy communications to lover and sire, assuring them of her faultless propriety and strict behaviour, and reminding Master Sandys that, were his charmer in any risk of damage, either to her actual modesty or popular reputation, he (Henry) would be the last man to encourage the continuance of her musical career.

There *are* moments, to be sure, when Florence *is* happy: you should be at the Opera to seize them. There, when illusion

wears its most persuasive shape, struggling with reality, and clutching at our coldest sense, we have witnessed her quiver with rapt entrancement, forget that her trials or joys were but ideal, and writhe or revel in a seemingly natural world of her own.

The glittering dames, the tiers of acclaiming auditors, the brilliant lights, and descending showers of *bouquet* adulation, had no power to break or assist the spell: it was music—the music of her own soul, through its terrestrial channel, that glorious voice—which surrounded and inspired her, wiling her away to its Elysian fields. Florence was happy then, transitorily happy, in the luxury of joy or woe.

This over, she returns, as it were, to earth, and mundane promptings usurp their influence, sober and sadden her heaving breast, reminding her of a relentless parent,

a penniless and interdicted attachment, and a sea with its million waves rolling between!

At such times, our good and independent Henry encourages his drooping charge with prophetic *chateaux d'Espagne*, whose denizens will be herself and Wellesly, himself and Lucy, and the General; and, with all her discernment, Miss Hamlyn evinces a wonderful facility for believing him.

Meanwhile, Norah has a letter from Lucy, the purport of which is to request, if Mr. Blake be not committed to a particular line of march, that they will advance, without halt, upon Lucca:—

"Miss Hamlyn, of whom I have frequently told you, is singing there, under Henry Lawrence's direction: circumstances, which she is best able to explain, and which are to a certain extent admissible, have

compelled her to fly from her aunt's house in Naples.

"Happily for them both, she encountered Henry; their relationship or attachment to common friends at once made them intimate, and interested in each other's fate; and they are now performing at the Opera House successfully — our best wishes, though we scarcely approve, attending their progress.

"But, with all this, you would do Miss Hamlyn an extreme kindness, were you to pitch your tent under the same zenith with her, at least for two months: let me tell you why. You know she is engaged to my brother, but that her father will not hear of it, and in great measure on account of the suitor's poverty.

"Now, just imagine, Norah: our dear, generous, Sir William, who takes the most

vital concern in *her* as in Wellesly's proceedings, will write by the next month's mail to Sir Geoffry Hamlyn, expostulating with him on his severity, and offering to settle, I don't know how much, but a large annuity, on the rejected son-in-law! Did you ever hear anything approaching to such bounty? I can almost cry when I recount it! I am commissioned, therefore, on the part of your Bridlestone friends, to entreat you to see Florence Hamlyn at once, to tell her what is negociating in her favour, and to remain with her while the answer is pending.

"Henry tells me she receives, occasionally, severe reprimands from India, rating her for her leap in the dark: now, the fact of her having no older, no married, person, no matron, to protect and accompany her, is a matter of sore reflection to us all: even

the notoriously heedless Wellesly seems to tremble for his charmer. By your good offices, Norah dear, this may at once be remedied. How I hope you can make a visit practicable and early! Adieu."

When Norah had read the above to her spouse, they ordered their bill, and started for Lucca. Calling on Henry, they were informed by the recognising and grinning Hassan that his master was at morning rehearsals. They drove to the theatre, having mounted the dragoman *en suite*, as index.

The greeting took place in the green-room; and most comical it was, we are assured: simple Norah and her simpler spouse kept staring at Henry and Florence, expecting them, no doubt, to vocalise the most ordinary topics of conversation.

Without further detail, we will mention that the curate and his wife were conducted

to a stage-box, there to await the end of the performance, and could scarcely restrain their new-fangled rapture. Neither had ever witnessed an opera before, and both from that day looked upon Henry and Florence as inspired.

Norah transcribed a long account of this interview for Lucy, in which Henry was termed—"Out and out the most charming boy she ever laid eyes on," and Florence—"more like an angel, or a queen, than one of us:" and Anthony thought it not derogatory to his cloth to commence writing a libretto—which was never finished—for an opera to be composed by his former pupil. Suffice it that one of the heroines was a great-grandmother, and that the first scene terminated with her elopement!

And thus two months slipped by.

CHAPTER XV.

We will digress, to reconnoitre some old acquaintances at Naples.

This gay and ancient city has great attractions for a certain style of people—let us term them the *ridotto*, or *casino* style.

Pauline, la Contessa di Castellano—whose husband descends in direct succession from the Argonaut founder—has congregated a large party of notables, at whose head we distinguish Aunt Ernestine and Mrs. Montgomery.

Although the Count—after the manner of Counts—seldom pesters his lovely Pauline with an over-dose of his society, prefer-

ring a faro-table in some secluded corner of the town, and sharing his leisure with a lady of more juvenile fascination: yet is he never twitted either for absence or neglect. They are invariably civil to each other—nothing more—individually having other fish to fry. Aunt Ernestine's large hazel eyes, however, exercise such powerful influence on this swarthy and butterfly noble, that his old haunts begin to see less of him, his mistress betakes herself to expostulation, and Pauline—*does not care a pin.*

Mrs. Montgomery, without much aptitude for gambling, is fearfully verbose, and in this way answers a purpose: addressing herself to the Neapolitan *roués* who cluster round the board, she instantly commands attention: her language, being English, is worse than Greek to them; but their gallantry compels them to give ear; and then

the Contessa, by the merest accident, surveys their hands, or regulates the table: thus is the decoy-duck available still!

But the pet of the hotel is Aunt Ernestine: her *physique*, repartee, pretty accent, and superficial talents, render her the magnet of fashionable propension: irresistible as a lure, you *must* play; distracted by her syren smiles, you *can't* win. Make your game, young Italy: fair speeches, in any case, you score—but Pauline gets the *poule*.

Never was Aunt Ernestine in fuller fling than throughout this evening. After supper, she actually volunteered to exhibit *poses plastiques* or *tableaux vivants*. Mrs. Montgomery, in the capacity of a parent, alone protesting. The sense, however, of the house running evidently the other way, Ma'mselle Ernestine retired to unrobe:

young Italy grew wild with excitement; but the Contessa, with her pug in her lap, and her active black eyes doing service, kept the rising generation to their game.

Totally disencumbered of any superfluous drapery, and with a strut that had done no disgrace to the Queen of the Gods—but the stubborn fact is that Ernestine had been quaffing champagne with the Count, and was making a goose of herself; so Mrs. Montgomery assisted Ceres—for that historical character was the model chosen—upstairs, and into bed. Young Italy jeered and brava'd—and lost the game; and the Contessa thought her party had gone off *à merveille*—in other words, *had paid well!*

Such was a night at the Hotel di ——,
E. G.

The Rector of Lawrenceville has been

promoted, and the living—a valuable one—is in Mrs. Lawrence's gift. Under favourable circumstances, it would have fallen at once to Blake; but the patron's shattered health and reason, coupled with her grudge, "alta mente repôstum," towards Anthony, for his marrying that "worldly-minded, besotted, plain fool," Norah, prevents solicitation on *his* part, and generosity on hers: so it lies temporarily vacant, much to Sir William Price's indignation.

One cannot be sure that those immured and drivelling remains of the once zealous and resigned devotee are, in their present condition, able to comprehend the matter: every ray of intelligence deserts her with daily increasing celerity, and now she barely recognises her daughters. Yet, such as she is, Mrs. Lawrence seems durable; and it had been a false alarm which hurried

Hélena from Bridlestone to catch her ebbing breath.

In a paroxysm of fear and contrition, when she fancied herself "in extremis," the widow had called for "Greenspur's wife," and counted the moments till she came: feeling, however, that her constitution was still able to make a fight, she resumed her sullen and melancholy habits of silence, darkened her room, and bolted her door. "When the devil was sick," &c.—a peculiarly happy illustration!

Lucy used to walk over daily towards Lawrenceville for Hélena.

"Bring your sisters, next time," said the former, as they parted, after a rather silent and funereal promenade on the downs.

Susan and Elinor accordingly appeared, but for such a brace our amiable little Lucy was totally unprepared. She had seldom

seen them previously, unless in church, and had never heard them speak in her life.

It was no wonder, therefore, that, when she ran encouragingly from topic to topic, and, as a *dernier ressort*, tried the weather, the idea arose in her mind that she might as well address herself to a couple of chimpanzees.

Pain succeeded wonder, when she grew to observe the chaos into which their reasoning faculties, finer feelings, mental vitality, had been left to fall: they were absolutely without imagination; nay, they scarcely appeared to comprehend her.

Prefacing a sentence apologetic and explanatory in French, their gloomy but highly-educated sister undertook to convince her friend that, however deficient in matter, they really possessed the power of speech. Tracts for the poor were intro-

duced, when immediately Elinor broke into a conversational gallop; while a dexterous allusion to domestic servants conveyed like impetus to Susan: whereupon ensued a further dialogue in the same unknown tongue between their juniors.

It was arranged that the novices were in future to share their walks, to be gradually encouraged to think and talk on general subjects, and so to be led on to acquire some degree, be it ever so trifling at the outset, of intellectual health.

In this labour of love these monitors took much concern; and not only were their efforts beginning to benefit and please their quondam, characterless disciples, but the very exertion from Hélena, as governess, soon told with good effect on her own spirits, looks, and manner. She had found, now, some sort of object in life—the hours

were now engrossed: she could sleep without hideous dreams.

At length, in the fulness of time, our calm but cheerful Lucy, who was quick to perceive the happy results of her charitable interference, and who daily reported progress to her eager abettors at Bridlestone, persuaded the three sisters to spend a day with Sir William and Miss Price and Mrs. Longfellow.

That was a happy event for them all. Sir William insisted on their visiting his poultry-yard, gave them a lecture on the properties of his hens, and presented them, in conclusion, with a basket of eggs, which, as being the produce of some volatile fowls, would put them into the best possible humour—he hoped.

Hélena actually smiled: all were enchanted by her beauty: it was death-like,

though; not the freshness and coolness of yore.

Miss Price, smirking with some reason, drove with them to visit the schools; and, in the evening, when the Baronet rose to conduct them home, our generous favourite, Mrs. Longfellow, begged their acceptance of some magnificent new volumes of travels—quite a novelty at Lawrenceville up to this time.

And so, from day to day, Lucy and Hélena persevered in their civilizing mission; blossoms gradually and imperceptibly evinced their success; until, in fine, that fruit formed which should ripen into happy years for the house of Lawrence.

As to the head of the house, she had quite given up seeing her children; they were clean forgotten. The only exception to this rule occurred on the following Satur-

day, when some temporary improvement in her disordered brain served to remind her of the whilom sacred duties of that day. She called for Anthony Blake; was told he had gone abroad; stared stupidly at her informant; desired her daughter Elinor to be brought, and her Bible; but, ere the message could be delivered, had relapsed into her listless imbecility again: and this was the latest gleam.

CHAPTER XVI.

Two arrivals of letters from home have, since our last mention of the Governor's party, done much to allay a father's and a lover's fears. The fact of a clergyman and his wife sojourning with the runaway singer, lulls every apprehension of injudicious company to rest: Florence's retirement from the public walks of life must be a work of time; at present she discovers no abatement of her *demon*.

Our poor, stricken Wellesly, never remarkably robust, has risen from his fever-couch the shadow of what he was—looking little else than eyes. He insists on re-

suming the duties of office; but Graham, with that kind consideration which won him such golden opinions, drops in, every spare moment, to help and relieve him.

The Secretary is dumb with gratitude; or, when he can give expression to his heartfelt thanks, is answered—

"Don't mention it, my dear Sandys; the compliment is all on your side!"

So, and no wonder, Wellesly thinks him an uncommonly fine, obliging fellow.

In this manner, another month glides past, and its termination brings another English mail.

Sir Geoffry is sitting before a table, and breaking open despatches, which form he goes through, as an official obligation, before his private and promiscuous correspondence is approached. The act of reverence once over, to be sure, they are tempo-

rarily flung aside, and an envelope, directed in a fine dashing hand, catches his fatherly eye—it is from Florence.

Hastily tearing the cover off, he deciphers the following brief but pithy words—

"I trust to you, my dear father, to give to Sir William's generous proposal that deliberate reflection which its subject deserves, and by which we may all be united again. I confess to have been rash, perhaps headstrong—at any rate, open to censure. Oh! beware, papa, of emulating your contrite

"FLORENCE."

"What can this mean?" muttered Sir Geoffry, in amaze.

Then he bethought him that he had begun at the wrong end.

"Where is the letter she alludes to?"

A shuffle produced it. We will not quote, but epitomize. You must remember that the two Baronets were old and familiar friends: you should know, in addition, that Sir William's elder brother, his predecessor in the title and estates, had mainly been the means of bringing the then young Hamlyn into notice: it was his interest which procured the commission; for Sir Geoffry, though of ancient lineage, was destitute of means. He had therefore to thank the Prices indirectly for his present comfortable holding.

To him Sir William found himself in a position to write a somewhat severe reproof for consigning his youthful daughter to the care of that now notoriously *careless* lady, whose social habits had so far alienated and chafed her, as to tempt her to flee, at the risk of her reputation, and to the great concern of all her friends, for re-

fuge to Lucca, and for livelihood to the stage.

"Why did you not send her at once to England? We should have been delighted to offer her a home," wrote the country gentleman to the veteran official.

"That's true; but Madeline insisted on Naples; and besides, I didn't like the idea of Sandys' sister," thought Sir Geoffry, without raising his eyes from the page.

Then came Sir William's remedy, much as Lucy wrote to Norah, but on the condition that Wellesly should be at once despatched to Europe to claim and protect the ladye fayre, to carry her off the boards, and to settle with her for the nonce at Bridlestone. The Baronet ended as follows:—

"I make this proposal after careful consideration; and, while I justify you for

having seen that a formidable objection existed hitherto to their union, I call upon you, if you value, as I feel certain you must, the real interests of Miss Hamlyn, to observe that all reasonable impediment is hereby removed."

The General, having read this paragraph more than once, and after a second reference to his daughter's curt epistle, crossed his fingers warily, and, closing his eyes, lay back on his chair to chew the cud. His first soliloquy took this form:—

"Have I any right to feel out of humour with so direct an invasion of my paternal prerogative?"

The answer denied that he had. Next came—

"Is a thousand a-year sufficient income for my Florence's husband?"

Having thought a long time on this ques-

tion, he seemed disposed to assent, and finally he went so far as to ask himself—

"Is Sandys, setting aside his pecuniary prospects, that description of customer whom I should choose for a son?"

The reply, although flattering to its subject, was not sufficiently convincing to himself; so he modified his catechism, and put selfishness utterly away. This done, the victory was easy.

"Is Sandys the kind of fellow that *Florence*, years hence, would have no reason to lament having chosen? How can I doubt it?—her whole life proves it," was the instant rejoinder.

Sir Geoffry sent for Wellesly. He came —poor, pallid, wretched-looking disciple that he was—but in high spirits, and as carefully dressed as ever. His dancing eyes somewhat disconcerted the superior, for he

fancied that the Secretary was making too sure of his prize.

"I'll bring the rascal down a peg or two," mused he. "Are you stronger to-day, Sandys?"

"Yes, thank you, sir, a very great deal."

"What news from home, eh?—good, I hope?"

"Most excellent, General!" returned Wellesly, flushing like a timid girl.

"Not too good, I hope, to be *true?* Come, now, young man—have you a *billet* from Miss Hamlyn in your collection? Answer me."

The Secretary, weak and nervous, trembled and reddened painfully before the sarcasm of his unusually stern observer: but there was nothing else for it; he stammered out—

"I have."

"And so she tells you she is ready to marry you, does she not? and that you must hurry home for the ceremony? Come now; out with it, out with it."

And the Governor bantered most mercilessly.

"No, Sir Geoffry; nothing of the kind—I give you my solemn word of honour: Miss Hamlyn....."

"Be careful, Sandys, to adhere to *facts!*" interrupted the *chef*, waspishly. He was nettled at what he considered an evasion, or even worse.

Wellesly instantly drew himself up, and, with a tone and look of unusual self-possession, replied—

"I have no further revelations to make, Sir Geoffry; and am grieved you show so little confidence in my honour. Pray, my business?—you sent for me to....."

"To congratulate you, my boy! Florence is yours!" And, as he spoke, he stretched across the table, drew the accepted, more dead than alive, to his side, and, kissing him warmly on either cheek, blubbered—for Sir Geoffry was in tears—"God bless you both!"

It was surprising, next day, what a stride towards recovery had been taken in the hours of darkness: Wellesly rose early and fresh, and was closeted a long time with his father.

"I wish I could bear you company, youngster!" said the Baronet, blithely. "I should like to see my silly girl in her histrionic garb just once, before she lays it off for ever."

To turn towards the meridian of Greenwich. Another and a direr calamity has

visited our dear mansion of Bridlestone: an unlooked for, sudden, appalling change, has converted its late cheerful haunts into dismal and deeply-sorrowing mourners—every belonging tree seems to droop and wither; every peasant and labouring man seems doubled down and heart-struck; the very dumb animals and feathered tribe moodily hang about the yard and hide among the shrubs, scared by the noisome blast of the Angel of Death.

Sir William Price has been summoned hence! That noble heart has ceased to throb!

Oh, feelingly we murmur, "*Requiescat in pace*"—for peaceful rest in a happier world is the fitting reward of such as he!

A week sufficed to close that life of usefulness and charity: at its commencement, a slight attack of what he had long learned

to consider constitutional, but harmless, held him unwilling prisoner in his room; of this opportunity he availed himself to read and revise his will. It was as though some inward warning impelled him to prepare for a long journey.

On the evening of the following Sabbath, being suddenly affected by excruciating pain, the village leech was summoned, and every possible remedy tried, but in vain—the malady having assumed its deadliest form: inflammatory action was working its sure way to the seat of those organs whence its fatal gripe is never loosed; and Sir William died the same night with fortitude and in certain hope of a glorious hereafter.

Then burst forth weeping and sore lamentation in every hamlet and at every hearth for miles round: a good man had passed away: the honest and industrious poor

deplored him. In the book of remembrance are his open-handed munificences stored!

But the pestilence had not spent its strength: the same relentless visiter stalked into that gloomy household at Lawrenceville—seized another victim—chose another head.

The widow Lawrence is also gone! Few were the tears and light the grief which followed this lady to her vaulted tomb: for months she had been in a manner dead—for years but a chill and austere recluse. Who was there in her family or her village to lament her loss? Who would have known it, but for the hearse and bell? *Was* she a loss to any one, in any degree? So much for Mrs. Lawrence!

Depend upon it, the opinion of mankind, when formed on long and deliberate experience, is no very false criterion of its ob-

ject's real character and deserts; and, oft as was checked the merry laugh at mention of the master of Bridlestone—the father of his people—none sighed the more for that the mistress of Lawrenceville Manor had ceased to live: our tale has in some measure and, may, we hope, to some purpose. shown why.

CHAPTER XVII.

The narrative wears to its close; an amalgam of happiness and misery, roses and thorns, virtues and crimes; above all, reward and retribution!

Henry has returned to England—to his lately interdicted home; having been written for, pressingly, by his mother's lawyer, as no will could be found, although it was known that Mrs. Lawrence, some years back, prepared one: it was important, therefore, that he should be at hand.

By mere chance, at length, the evidence of a maid, who alone had communication with the deceased, established that, on her

going into Mrs. Lawrence's room, some three or four mornings previous to that lady's death, she observed her mistress endeavouring to secrete a long sheet of written paper; that, subsequently—indeed, if the Abigail remembered rightly, but a few hours before her end—the widow, rising from her bed, and muttering, quite unintelligibly, tottered feebly to the fire-place, and, making the document into a scroll, crammed it carefully into the blaze between the bars—the servant, until questioned, never giving the occurrence a second thought.

It is therefore conjectured that, about the date of Henry's expulsion, the matron, indignant, defeated, and chagrined, had made such alterations in her testament, as would effectually disinherit her son; but that, in the hour of death, the prickings and stingings of an aroused and accusing

conscience terrified her into a quickened sense of maternal duty; that then, unable to erase the objectionable parts herself, and unwilling—even at this eleventh hour—to incur any expense by employing a limb of the law, she committed the entire document to the flames, and thus left, intentionally, her large accumulations and great landed property to fall, in the natural course, into a proper and legal adjustment. Conscience often propels by fear, when it has failed by love.

Meantime, where is our overjoyed invalid? Just wait! When the *soi-disant* Perlotti was unexpectedly hurried away from his engagements, Florence determined, much to the mortification of the Lucca *coterie musicale*, temporarily to retire from the Opera, and await, in the company of her merry-faced and highly-appreciated

Norah, the fully anticipated return of her *impresario* friend.

At this juncture, and one mild Italian eve, Norah, having directed the obedient Tony—as she always nicked him—not to mind *her*, and, in lieu, to make himself as agreeable as possible to Miss Hamlyn, betook herself early to bed.

Presently the doctor, a very ceremonious and scraggy *Quichote* of a *medico*, by a fortunate fatality, peeped in, and having gone in person to inquire for Madame, speedily returned on tiptoe with a message for *La Signorína*, who followed him duly from the room; Anthony, beginning to grow nervous, in turn pursued — the result of all which being, that, before midnight, a horrible little shapeless monster was fast asleep in the clerical arms paternal, and Norah able to smile her thanks for Florence's noiseless

care. So cheerful a blink of social sunshine must not escape our generally murky quill.

But there came to be more than a birth at Lucca—start not, fair Reader, Norah shall not die; quite the reverse, she is up, and so far herself again as to sit at the windows, looking out on the silvery Serchio, the misty Apennine, and wooded ramparts.

"Well, now, really I can't understand," said Norah, "why on earth they call Lucca '*L'Industriosa!*'—sure its citizens seem the laziest people in the world."

"Save *your own* countrymen, Norah," rejoined Florence, archly.

"Do leave those wretched Paddies alone—please do—you provoking thing!—but look — there is a stir to-day; here come a chaise and postillions, dashing along, and the *lazzaroni* running out of the way. Ah,

you're too late, now they've turned the corner!"

At that moment, a loud ringing of bells astonished them all, and awoke Miss Blake; a sound of rapid steps—the door opened—and Wellesly and Florence were in each other's arms!

There was no concealment about it, nothing to conceal—what ecstasy!—his coming was proof of her father's approbation!

Anthony soon returned from his walk, and they had a jovial feast of it that afternoon.

Next day it was arranged—all here standing and saying "Amen"—that when Norah could get into—excuse me, ladies, were you discreet enough not to sport them, I would have no occasion to bring them under notice—*stays*, the connubial apex should be

hoisted over their impatient heads, and the *prima donna* become Mrs. Sandys.

On the morrow, when the approaching maturation of their adventure-marked courtship drew them, by an irresistibly jealous selfishness, towards the shady and unfrequented river side, a servant suddenly interrupted the most amatory and interesting sighs that ever love-stricken swain unbosomed, by presenting a packet of foreign letters to the somewhat disconcerted scribe.

"What—what is here?—Oh, God, not Lucy, I hope!" And Wellesly burst open the sombre seal.

It was in Lucy's writing — which relieved him; and the twain read it together, anxiously and amazed, as follows:—

"Bridlestone.

"In case of Sir Geoffry Hamlyn's assent, my dear brother, the probability of your

arriving from India by this month's steamer, and the certainty, in that event, of your proceeding direct to Lucca, induce me to address to you there.

"Poor Sir William is no more! He died most unexpectedly last week; was scarcely unwell till within a few hours of his decease, and had no idea himself that there existed any danger. It was an attack of his old complaint, which, settling in a dangerous quarter, brought his cherished and useful life to so sad a close.

"Miss Price is quite serene, but I can see that *to be so* costs her many a fearful struggle. Mrs. Longfellow, with her usual composure, is able to assist me in reading to and comforting her sister: I dare not trust myself further—for is it not a trial, dearest?

"My warm affection and a kiss—allow-

able now—to Florence. Show this to Norah, with an old friend's fond love, and come home—all of you—when you can.

"Henry is here—his mother being dead. What changes, Wellesly!—and all within one fleeting year!

"I am desired to inform you, that, Sir William's will having been read, the mass of his property, with large legacies to all his friends, is bequeathed to—*you*. That you may make as good use of it as did, on all occasions, the donor, is the hope of

"Your own faithful sister,

"LUCY SANDYS.

"PS. When I wrote, 'Henry is here,' I did not mean in the house, but at Lawrenceville, of which he is master now. He sends me notes, and sonnets, and flowers,

every day, and will come himself, when I can see him.

"L. S."

By the same opportunity arrived a letter from Henry to his tutor.

"Lawrenceville.

"My dear Blake—By my mother's demise, and the promotion of Mr. Collins elsewhere, I am enabled to offer, for your acceptance, the rectory of Lawrenceville. That this or any return for your early attention to myself, and, still more, for your own and Mrs. Blake's parental care of my future brother-in-law's betrothed wife, will rank no higher than a mere acknowledgment, I am well aware. For such as you, however, there is a richer reward in store, which, that I may share in your company, is my heartfelt prayer! But lead your *troupe*, as soon as may be, home.

"If Sir Geoffry has relented, on receipt of our dear lamented friend's most generous design, you will shortly find a courtier whom we mutually love coming to claim Miss Hamlyn at your hands—indeed, he ought to show about the time that you decipher this. If, on the other hand, the old man still holds out, we must persuade his daughter to accompany you hither.

"By the by, I should remember to hope that Mrs. Blake has quite recovered—she was likely to be indisposed for a period when I left Lucca, and I am anxious to learn the result.

"Above everything, and again, I counsel you to turn westward, at your earliest ability; as, for certain reasons—private—too delicate and delightful to disclose, I shall presently require your sacerdotal aid!

"With every kind wish for yourself, your lady, my pupil, and should he really appear, a thousand congratulations to *Lucy's brother*, believe me,

"Ever your obliged and affectionate

"HENRY LAWRENCE."

Anthony nearly bit off his baby's lips that night with continuous kissing!

CHAPTER XVIII.

Another change. It is quite, apparently, *comme ordinaire* with the great guns at Government House, save that Sir Geoffry keeps more and more to himself, and Madeline more and more to Graham.

A large vessel is lading in the harbour for Sydney, and, her cargo being all on board, she will sail with the earliest wind. Much to the wonderment of the agents, the finest cabin in this good ship has been secured and paid for by a man representing himself to be a reduced planter, desirous to try his fortunes in emigration; whose ponderous baggage, to be sure, and white servant — through whom he negociated the

passage—evince but doubtful indications of that hard fate, poverty, which is declared to be driving him to other shores.

A Library ball, meantime, rages with all the intensity that a crowded *assemblée*, a thermometer at 92°, an indefinite amount of champagne, and a devoted adherence to polkas, can produce. Outside, in the dark veranda, two men converse in a whisper.

"She is a-liftin' her anchors, sir, this blessed minute: sure, I'm just after speakin' to the first lieutenant, and he bid me hurry yez on boord."

"Is the wind fair?—can we get off at once?" returned the other.

"As fair as ever blew, yer honour: we'll be out o' sight o' land afore mornin'."

"Hasten, then, to the pier—have the boat ready to shove off—in with the maid—and we'll follow in a trice."

They parted.

Sir Geoffry sits at home, concocting all manner of pleasant anecdotes for a letter to Florence; but, just as the clock strikes eleven, he rises with much military precision, locks his drawer, and retires to his small camp-bed.

Far removed from Madeline's wing of the huge pile, he is neither disturbed by her fussy preparations for the ball, nor need fear being awoke by her languid and fatigued return.

The Library *fête* goes on; a lively popping of corks gives a *staccato* effect to the exciting strains of Labitzky or Musard: people begin to be pleasant.

At this moment the *tatties* of the rear veranda are gently raised — two muffled figures pass under, and disappear with their fall. Softly crossing to the grass, and

stealthily gliding through the *sooria* trees, they run rather than walk to the beach: stepping into the expectant boat, they take their seats, and, venturing no word, are pulled with rapid stroke alongside the Sydney-bound brig.

Hurrying on deck in the dim starlight, the shorter—apparently a female—is received at the gangway by the officer of the watch: with a peculiar smile, which even in the darkness could not escape that figure's eyes, he points to the cuddy-stairs, and directs her to her cabin. Followed by the huge cloaked and otherwise disguised planter, she rushes whither an opening displays her waiting luggage: in they dart together, glaring on each other with wild and fiendish smiles — shut the door, uncover, and are—Madeline and Graham—Greenspur!

Meanwhile, the man and maid have come on board, the small boat has been hauled up, the sails are set, and away the schooner flies—away, like a meteor, or phantom, before the whistling wind.

A few words will conclude their awful tale: they were never heard of—ship, or mortal in her—more. Whether she went down at sea, by the judgment of God: whether she was captured by the Proas-men of the Eastern sea, and sunk—with the exception of Madeline, who would be a rich trophy for the *zenana* of a Malay; or whether she was battered to pieces amid the shoals of Torres Straits—they were never heard of more!

Months have elapsed: the General is at home: yes, indeed, in a home at last! He and his daughter and son, and the two sable-clad but unrepining matrons, make a

very nice party at Bridlestone; while "over the way," as he jokingly says, live Henry and Lucy, and three vastly improved young ladies, their sisters.

Hélena has in great measure ridded herself of her sad, downcast looks, and melancholy musings; and as for "the girls"—Susan and Elinor—they are perfectly unrecognisable by any previous acquaintance: so merry, so full of interest about every one and every thing, and going to London with their friends in spring.

Norah and Anthony, and juvenile Norah —Anthony would not allow her to be named after any one else—are flourishing, as good, hearty, lightsome people should flourish, and expect an increase, of course, immediately—not to their fortune, which is abundant, but—to their domestic flock.

Hassan, of late grown desirous to bring

round Janet to his amatory way of thinking, meets with a contemptuous negative on the part of that national female, followed up by the invariable soliloquy—

"Hum! does he think I'd be sich a fool as to throw myself away on a dirty, Mahommedan furriner! *I* likes his impidence!"

We fear his chances of an amicable settlement are therefore slight, though perhaps only remote. In the interim, he devotes himself, by permission, in lieu of his *hookabadar* engagements, now rendered superfluous by Lucy interdicting the pipe—a severe measure, Hassan deems it, towards her darling Henry—to superintending the enormous establishments of pensioner horses, dogs, fowls, and other sinecurists, for each of whom, by name, a particular provision was made in the multifarious codicils of Sir William Price's characteristic will.

One other scene, and then farewell.

As Wellesly and Anthony, with their respective families—fancy Wellesly a family man!—were journeying home from Lucca, they delayed, for some real or fancied reason, two days in Paris. On the last evening, while discussing, over their *café*, the pleasanter way to employ an idle two hours—at the French or the Italian Opera—the *garçon* entered, with a note in bad English for "*Monsieur Blake, homme d'Eglise,*" and "*Vitement,*" underlined. It ran as follows:—

"You come to Rue ——, No. 113, and see one English girl die there: she very sick. You come the now. God bless!"

Norah was not for her Tony's going at all: at any rate, he must leave his watch;

and "would Mr. Sandys keep him company?"

"Oh, yes!"

Off they started, a tall woman flitting before them, and leading the way.

At last, and after much crossing and recrossing of dirty, and narrow, and loathsome lanes, they halted before the door. It was opened; a tattered cap having first reconnoitred from a broken window-pane.

Groping their steps up crumbling and quaking stairs, into a miserable garret, whose draughty air was fetid with abomination and crime, and where huge, grey-whiskered rats, in fearless myriads, sported, and squeaked, and fought: they were pointed to a wretched pallet, on which—but they came too late—lay the skeleton corpse of Violette de Merton!

"You give money for what you call *en-*

tomber? I not got none. *Pauvre Ma'm-selle!*"

Wellesly stopped the woman's mawkish sympathy with a handful of gold.

They hurried from the place, Grignon opening the door for them to pass out. He was the bully, no doubt, of that filthy den.

Next day they quitted Paris.

And here we take our leave—*mais, au revoir!*

CONCLUSION.

Tolerant Reader—Permit me to reverse the illustration of a popular genius, and assert that he who has much to communicate under this head, and expects to rivet attention, courts comparison with the squalid wretch who, at the moment of your leaving the theatre, tired, heated, and morose, after a lengthened performance, waylays you with some begging-letter and a woe-begone face, and endeavours to stay your eager progress towards home.

I believe it is absolutely requisite, however, at this moment of taking myself off, and in order to acquit myself, in the opinion of some amongst you, of any base or under-

hand design, to volunteer the assurance that, throughout the foregoing narrative, personalities have been studiously avoided.

Mrs. Lawrence, Violette, Lady Hamlyn, Greenspur, &c., are representatives, severally, not of an *individual*, but of a *class;* and the epidemic, under whose influence they had plainly lost all those finer and better feelings which we may suppose them, at some period, to have shared with their neighbours, is as common as we observed it to be infectious—its *virus* permeating our whole social system.

If I have succeeded, in any degree, in bringing home to your convictions the necessity for establishing such sanitary laws as may either abate the pestilence instanter, or at least confine its victims to a strict quarantine, and thus effectually prevent its spread, my object has been fully attained.

Much in this domestic department assuredly remains to be effected—much to be hunted out by the pen of a ready scribe, and rooted out by the combined force of increasing intelligence and morality: parable and contrast must unite to expose and remedy the disease; and to this end has my purpose been directed — earnestly, I can vouch; usefully, let me hope.

Where arrogant selfishness, blind bigotry, and heartless fanaticism, exist in any form, there is inseparably present a huge and infectious danger; but, where defects of this nature take to themselves the semblance of true religion—deck themselves in tinsel and paint—to counterfeit its attractiveness and beauty—the danger increases tenfold. Vice is most fatal when wearing the mask of Virtue—most difficult of exposure and denunciation when lurking in the privacy of

the domestic circle, coiling around the household altar, basking on the hearth-stone, and making the *cunabula* its bed.

While I hold to the cheering fact that our best hope for this, as for every, grievance, points to the SUPREME, I desire to have laboured not altogether vainly in my initiatory effort to sow and water a few grains of the good seed.

Such, finally, is the *index* of my tale, whose *action* forms but one phase of the many which constitute the

VAGARIES OF LIFE.

THE END.

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